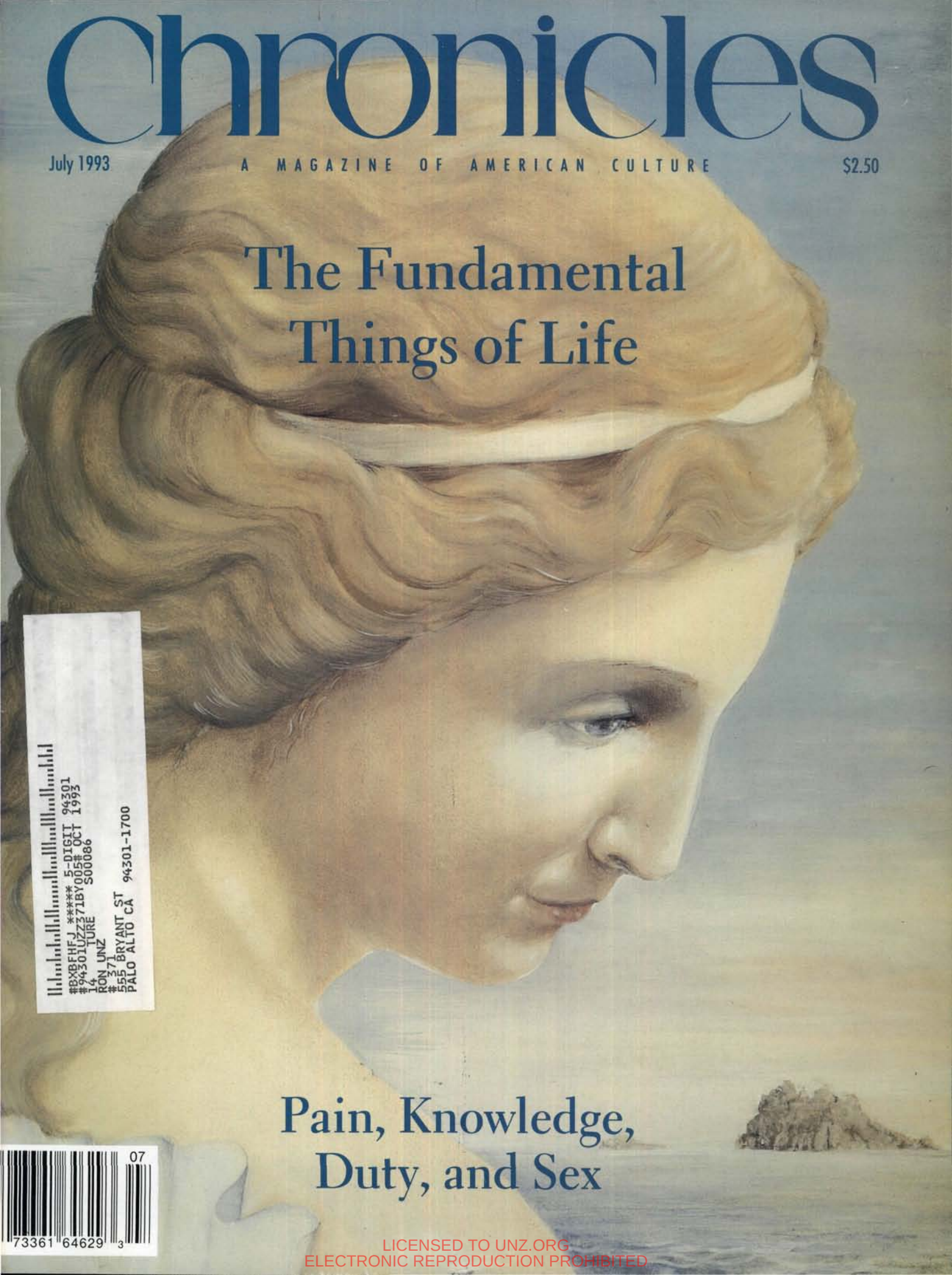
Chronicles

July 1993 A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE $2.50



The Fundamental Things of Life

Pain, Knowledge, Duty, and Sex

#BXBFHFJ ***** 5-DIGIT 94301
#94301UZZ371BY005# OCT 1993
14 S00086
TURE
RON UNZ
#371
555 BRYANT ST
PALO ALTO CA 94301-1700

07
73361 64629 3

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If you're hooked on the history of flight...

Accept Guest Membership in The National Air & Space Museum

Your first benefit is the next issue of

AIR&SPACE
Smithsonian

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY EDITION 20 Years Since Apollo 11
AIR&SPACE
AIR&SPACE
Vigilant Vigeras: swift, Swedish, and unswervingly neutral

Man's greatest adventure began when Orville Wright lifted off the ground for 12 seconds. Sixty-six years later, Neil Armstrong landed on the moon. But it wasn't until 1986 that a magazine devoted to flight was born.

NOW you can share the adventure in AIR & SPACE/ *Smithsonian*.

SOAR with Voyager circumnavigating the globe nonstop.

SEE the giant Hindenburg materialize from the clouds and sail silently past you on her voyage to destruction at Lakehurst.

ORBIT Earth with Astronaut Sally K. Ride watching "smoke rise from fires that dotted the east coast of Africa, and moments later, ice floes jostling for position in the Antarctic."

Walk the bucking deck of an aircraft carrier at sea. Study pilots' UFO reports. Peddle across the English Channel in a human powered blimp.

You risk nothing

As a Guest Member of the National Air & Space Museum, accept the next issue of AIR & SPACE/-*Smithsonian* on approval (cover price: $3.50). Then subscribe, if you wish, at generous savings.

Take advantage of discounts on books, records, art and gifts from the Smithsonian Shops and the Smithsonian catalog. Attend free lectures. Enjoy reduced rates at the Museum's Imax films and Planetarium presentations. Your Membership Card guarantees a special member's welcome.

To accept this No-Risk offer and the savings that go with it, mail the coupon today.

Accept the next issue of AIR&SPACE/*Smithsonian* as the Museum's guest.

GUEST MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please enroll me as a Guest Member of the National Air & Space Museum for two months and send me the next issue of AIR & SPACE/*Smithsonian*. My guest privileges also include discounts on books, records, art and gifts from the Smithsonian Shops and the Smithsonian catalog, free lectures and reduced rates at the Museum's Imax films and Planetarium presentations. If I choose to continue, I will pay only $18 annually, and get five more bi-monthly issues for a total of six of AIR & SPACE/*Smithsonian* plus all other benefits above.

☐ Payment Enclosed. (Make check payable to Air & Space/*Smithsonian*.)

☐ Bill me $18

My name *(please print)*

Street *Apt*

City *State* *Zip*

Gift recipient's name

Street *Apt*

City *State* *Zip* 1CHRM/3ABK9

This guest membership is: ☐ For myself ☐ A gift ☐ Myself plus gift

Outside U.S., dues are $24 payable in advance in U.S. funds. 85% dues designated for magazine subscription. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of first issue.

MAIL TO: AIR & SPACE/Smithsonian, 228 East 45th Street, Suite 1515, New York, NY 10017

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

PERSPECTIVE

Mind Your Own Business 14
by Thomas Fleming

The rise of the meddler.

VIEWS

How Do You Know? by George Watson 18

The deconstruction of knowledge.

Pain Without Purpose by Patrick Reilly 23

The modern dilemma.

The Ideology of Technology by Thomas Molnar 27

The push for uniformity.

OPINIONS

Women and Biographers First! 30
by F.W. Brownlow
Martin Stannard: *Evelyn Waugh: The Later Years 1939-1966.*

How not to write a biography.

Who Needs the Historical Jesus? 32
by Jacob Neusner
John P. Meier: *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus.*
John Dominic Crossan: *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant.*

Why facts are not faith.

REVIEWS

Stephen L. Tanner has high praise for Wendell Berry's *Fidelity: Five Stories* and *Sabbaths, 1987-1990* ◆ Jared Taylor's *Paved With Good Intentions: The Failure of Race Relations in Contemporary America* is bold and refreshingly frank, writes **David Gordon** ◆ Nat Hentoff's *Free Speech for Me—But Not for Thee: How the American Left and Right Relentlessly Censor Each Other* is helpful but misguided, reports **Brian Robertson** ◆ **Stephen Bodio** recommends Gregory McNamee's *Named in Stone and Sky: An Arizona Anthology* ◆ Harold C. Schonberg's *Horowitz: His Life and Music* is a stirring read, says **J.O. Tate** ◆ 35

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From Serbia: Notes From the Front, Part II 42
by Momcilo Selic

Letter From New York City: Life as Pathology 45
by Herbert I. London

Letter From the Lower Right: The Mississippi Hippies and Other Denizens of the Deep (South) 47
by John Shelton Reed

VITAL SIGNS

A Letter to Senator John Kerry: Sex and Soldiering 49
by John Lofton

DEPARTMENTS

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES 4

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS 5

PRINCIPALITIES & POWERS 10
A Perpetual Censor
by Samuel Francis

POETRY
Emerson 17
and
To a Saxon Poet by Jorge Luis Borges 48
Translated by Robert Mezey

Dipstick, 29
Long Hours in the Sun, and 29
The Afterworld 41
by Charles Edward Eaton

ON THE COVER

Cover painting by Maciej Urbaniec.

JULY 1993/3

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITOR
Thomas Fleming

MANAGING EDITOR
Theodore Pappas

SENIOR EDITOR, BOOKS
Chilton Williamson, Jr.

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Christine Haynes

ART DIRECTOR
Anna Mycek-Wodecki

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
John W. Aldridge, Harold O.J. Brown, Katherine Dalton, Samuel Francis, George Garrett, E. Christian Kopff, Clyde Wilson

CORRESPONDING EDITORS
Janet Scott Barlow, Bill Kauffman, John Shelton Reed, David R. Slavitt

EDITORIAL SECRETARY
Leann Dobbs

PUBLISHER
Allan C. Carlson

PUBLICATION DIRECTOR
Guy C. Reffett

COMPOSITION MANAGER
Anita Fedora

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Rochelle Frank

A publication of The Rockford Institute.
Editorial and Advertising Offices:
934 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103.
Editorial Phone: (815) 964-5054.
Advertising Phone: (815) 964-5811.
Subscription Department: P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054. Call 1-800-877-5459.
For information on advertising in *Chronicles*, please call Rochelle Frank at (815) 964-5811.

U.S.A. Newsstand Distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Road, Sandusky, OH 44870.

Copyright © 1993 by The Rockford Institute.
All rights reserved.

Chronicles (ISSN 0887-5731) is published monthly for $24 per year by The Rockford Institute, 934 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103-7061. Second-class postage paid at Rockford, IL and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Chronicles*, P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054.

The views expressed in *Chronicles* are the authors' alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Rockford Institute or of its directors. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Vol. 17, No. 7 July 1993

Printed in the United States of America

On 'New Jersey's Helmet Law'

Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, brilliant laissez-faire economist of 18th-century France, said that interventions by the government to protect consumers "would be like wanting it to provide cushions for all the children who might fall." If he were alive today, wouldn't he be amused to learn that a sober (?) New Jersey legislature (Cultural Revolutions, March 1993), in mandating helmets for all children riding bicycles, finally took him literally instead of mistaking his words for simple ridicule?

—*Morgan Reynolds*
Department of Economics
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX

On 'Walt Whitman and P. C.'

I was appalled to read of A.S. Ash's "humanizing" of Walt Whitman's poetry (Liberal Arts, March 1993) and perhaps even astounded that Ash left the poet's last name intact instead of changing it to "Whitperson." Who is this Ash, anyway? He/she/it has not "edited" but rather tampered with a work of art, in the name of political correctness. Whitman, regardless of how one feels about his poetry, wrote in his own unique voice—and that voice, like the voice of any poet, deserves to be heard the way it was originally presented, not just for artistic integrity but for historical accuracy.

A self-styled "humanist," Ash apparently has no grasp of what poetry entails or expresses. Poets choose their words not solely for meaning but for sound and rhythm as well. For Ash to replace any poet's words "where appropriate" (and here one must ask: appropriate to whom and by what criterion?) is plainly absurd. One can just imagine Ash as a music editor, reharmonizing the "incorrect" parallel fifths of a Beethoven composition, or maybe as a museum curator, recoloring various faces in Leonardo's "The Last Supper" for the sake of achieving ethnic balance.

More idiotic still is Ash's introduction of "humanist personal pronouns" into Whitman's work "in cases where distinction of gender is ambiguous, irrelevant, or misleading." The pronouns *who*, *whose*, and *whom* (rendered "humanistically" by Ash as *hu*, *hus*, and *hum*) do not convey, and have never conveyed, any kind of gender distinction, so what is Ash's point in making these ridiculous substitutions? Ash has merely replaced the traditional spellings with phonetic spellings, and not very good ones at that.

Ash has the aesthetic sensibility of a mule and the linguistic scholarship of a hinny—animals that, fittingly enough, are almost always neuter. P.C. means political correctness, but in Ash's case these letters might also stand for philosophical cowardice and philological cretinism.

—*Louis B. Delpino*
Philadelphia, PA

On 'Ancestry and History'

As Czeslaw Milosz has written, "The true enemy of man is generalization." In his March 1993 column ("Capture the Flag, Part I") John Shelton Reed writes: "As Eugene Genovese, characteristically gallant, observed during an exchange on the subject at a recent meeting of the American Studies Association, no one should be required to spit on his ancestors' graves."

Well if not required to spit on their ancestors' graves then shouldn't they be encouraged to do so if their ancestors are people like Lenin, Stalin, and other communist monsters, or if their ancestors are Hitler or the Auschwitz camp commandant? I'm talking about the genocidists of the 20th century, the people about whom Ralph Raico was talking in the same March issue. Professor Genovese may be "characteristically gallant," but if Professor Reed quotes him correctly he's being—uncharacteristically—morally obtuse.

—*Arnold Beichman*
Hoover Institution
Stanford, CA

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SACRIFICE, a word not often heard in the nation's capital during the past dozen years, is being spoken by Washington politicians again. Since none of these gentlemen or ladies has been noticed even to observe Lent, much less to abstain from newly acquired powers, perquisites, and salaries, the rest of the country may be likened to 255 million turkeys nervously watching the Big House where smoke from ritual fires has already begun to ascend from the chimney and trying to recall, like the characters in the ethnic joke, whether Thanksgiving comes before Easter.

Malcolm Muggeridge (I think it was) once defined liberalism as Christianity without the Cross. This insight, though true, is incomplete, implying as it does that secular humanism is willing to deny the justification for suffering by the majority, excluding only the usual designated and preferred categories of victim groups. In fact, however, that is not the case: what is lacking in liberalism is not the Cross, it is the One who was placed on the Cross; not suffering itself but the identity of the Sufferer, the Priest as Victim, God made man in reparation for man's sins. Of course, liberals have historically denied that personal suffering has any value, while their determination to be as gods themselves has led them to resist the actuality of the Son of God. Yet as Pascal said, nothing is more obvious than the fallenness of man's nature—even to a liberal. And so liberalism, while rejecting the theological concept of sin, retains nevertheless a sense of human guilt requiring expiation—perhaps we should simply say punishment—through sacrifice. And having rejected out of hand the possibility of a Divine Victim, liberalism recognizes a single candidate worthy to serve for the oblation: We the People, of course.

This—the chosen suffering that ends in death, not life—is the meaning of what Muggeridge in a famous essay called "The Liberal Death Wish," the explanation for the otherwise inexplicable and seemingly irrational impulse toward self-destruction of modern liberal societies, from their love affair with abortion to their commitment to immigration policies that are certain, if implemented for a sufficient period, to wreck the so-called host countries and the long-standing political institutions that govern them. Conscious of sin, but lacking a theological explanation for it, liberalism is a construction of self-hating people seeking to destroy themselves and the societies to which they belong as rapidly and effectively as they can manage, which turns out to be very rapidly and very effectively indeed.

As I write, three months into the Clinton administration, the alleged need for national "sacrifice" has claimed: the "moderate" positions adopted by the Democratic candidate in the months preceding the election last November; his promise of a tax break for the American middle class, as well as a number of other solemn pledges and assurances; the economic recovery begun during the Bush administration, which the Clinton administration would like to reverse by tax increases and spending bills aimed at rescuing and preserving the dream of socialism in America; millions of unborn children whose lives are to be offered up to the progressive shibboleths of feminism and no-fault promiscuity; and 60-odd nuts and eccentrics, plus 17 children, whose lives were made forfeit by Janet Reno and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to the majesty and prestige of the leviathan state. Not a bad record at all, when you consider that Easter was only ten days ago.

—*Chilton Williamson, Jr.*

JACK KEMP was the great champion of freedom, according to official conservatives, whereas Dick Darman was the "Prince of Darkness." In fact, whatever was wrong with Darman (President Bush's budget director), Kemp was far worse.

The Kemp-Darman battle came down to this: Kemp, a leftist Republican, constantly sought to expand the budget for his "war on poverty," and Darman, a moderate with twice Kemp's IQ, was sometimes able to stand in his way. For example, Kemp's HOPE (Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere) program for the semi-privatization of public housing was costing more than $100,000 per unit. According to Jason DeParle's "Kemp Loses the War on Poverty" in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, Darman pointed out that it would be cheaper to buy poor blacks their own condos, causing a temper tantrum from Kemp. But even Darman didn't point out—as Jeffrey A. Tucker did in *Chronicles*—that the units were not really sold to their tenants, since tenants could not in turn sell them on the open market. Worse, a new unit of public housing had to be built for each one "sold." Darman did note that "enterprise zones" were simply excuses for more welfare spending, and that state-level zones hadn't worked. And Darman warned Kemp not to call them "opportunity zones" as he wanted to do, or people would be making fun of "the Land of Oz."

At a meeting of cabinet undersecretaries, Kemp called it "unconscionable" that welfare recipients lose a dollar in benefits for each dollar earned. His answer: let them keep 85 cents in welfare for each new dollar earned. Darman, who had just stepped into the room, did some quick arithmetic in his head and pointed out that such a plan would allow people earning $70,000 a year to collect welfare. There is a large "technical literature on welfare," Darman noted. Kemp should read it. By this and other actions, Darman showed that he had a "really sick attitude," said Kemp. Darman "didn't care about poverty; he cared about what the budget looked like." There's "not a single inner city of the United States that even knows who Dick Darman is" (to his credit, some might say).

A nut as well as a leftist, Kemp "would flop in his cabinet seat like a beached whale, sink his head into his hands, roll his eyes, and scribble exasperated notes." He would also lean back in his chair and stick a finger down his throat to show his opposition to an idea or person. Those who criticized him were "wee-weeing on me." One of those wee-weeing was the President, who refused to let Kemp call his proposals a "War on Poverty." Such a phrase conjured up visions of big government even for Bush.

Kemp had had trouble from the beginning. On his first day as HUD secretary, he took an inch-thick stack of spending proposals to White House

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chief of Staff John Sununu. Darman arrived with one sheet showing the costs. "It just blew apart Kemp's ideas before they ever got started," said former Kemp aide Thomas Humbert. "The death question was always, 'How are you going to pay for it?'" an administration official told DeParle. "These people had no clue."

They did come up with the word "empowerment" as "a way of sounding conservative and activist at the same time." Darman noted that "empowerment" was popularized by commie Saul Alinsky in the 1960's and asked that it not be used in any memo to him. "You people," he told the Kempians, "don't understand the connotation of the word." When he heard about this, Kemp said: that's "sick," that's "a sick thought." (We are not told whether he stuck his finger down his throat.) As to the favorite phrase of Kemp's White House soulmate, James Pinkerton, Darman asked: "Hey, brother, can you paradigm?"

But Kemp kept rolling on his wobbly way, and at another meeting he flipped out over the purple suspenders of staffer Richard Porter, which would deny him "any credibility with poor people." Kemp lectured him on the "proper anti-poverty dress," presumably not by Chanel.

When Kemp visited Los Angeles after the anti-poverty riots, a group of black Democratic mayors—America's loudest advocates of more welfare—"swarmed around Kemp," which he proclaimed as a great tribute. They did not, he pointed out off the record, swarm around Bush (an actual tribute to the President). At a black boys club the next day, Kemp "stole the crowd's attention" from the President with repeated "exaggerated shoulder rolls." It was "a little bit of a goofy thing to do," admitted a Kemp aide.

At a press breakfast a week after the riots, Kemp recalled "the lessons of racial equality he had picked up in locker rooms filled with black athletes." He didn't describe what those millionaires had taught him, but he did call his war on poverty "my way of redeeming my existence on this earth. I wasn't there with Rosa Parks or Dr. King or John Lewis, but I am here now and I am going to yell from the rooftops about what we need to do."

We need to do something, too. As Kemp yells, does his shoulder rolls, and mimics Valley girls with his gag-me-with-a-spoon routine, we need to spread the word about what Wacky Jack actually stands for.

—*Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.*

THE DEBATE OVER GAYS in the military has highlighted the progressive impulse to look anywhere but to America for cultural truth. On talk shows and in editorials, Americans are urged to emulate "other industrialized nations" (read "increasingly decadent Western Europe") that permit openly homosexual soldiers and sailors. Often praised is Holland, whose ponytailed, hairnet-coiffed legions strike terror in exactly nobody. But perhaps we shouldn't be too quick to judge; except for World Cup soccer, the Dutch have fought no major battles since Hitler rolled over their defenses in about 12 minutes.

Another contender for military correctness is France, which does not ask inductees their sexual orientation. But hold *les* horses. When a French soldier is found to be overtly homosexual, he is sent to a psychiatric unit for appraisal, and usually reassigned to national civilian service. "There's a cultural difference," says a French military official who requested anonymity. "Homosexuality is less of a stigma for us. And you have a voluntary force; we have a draft. If you could escape military service simply by declaring homosexuality, 85 percent of our conscripts would turn out to be 'homosexual.'"

Israel, whose policy toward women in combat (forbidden since 1948) is often misconstrued, is similarly misrepresented on its homosexual policy. In a report to the United States Army cited in the *Washington Times*, military personnel expert Charles Moskos of Northwestern University summarizes: "*De facto*, open gays in the Israeli Defense Forces are treated much in the manner of women soldiers, e.g., usually they reside in their homes, are not allowed into combat units, and are kept out of forward base areas."

In NATO, 10 of 15 nations ban or restrict homosexuals in the military, according to a study by the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe (SHAPE). The good guys, at least by Barney Frank's standards, are Canada, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Norway. Bad guys include Spain, Greece, Portugal, Turkey, Italy, Germany, Iceland, and Belgium (which defines homosexuality as "a psychological anomaly inconsistent with military service").

The real stinkers, however, are the United States and Great Britain, both of which still fight occasional wars. Although Britain does not ban homosexuals outright the way the United States does, gay soldiering is discouraged through "administrative" means. Major John Sylvester, staff officer at the British Embassy in Washington, explains: "There's a degree of subtlety here. If there's conduct unbecoming, then we could discharge." But conduct unbecoming can be as simple as an open declaration of sexual attraction to the other troops, especially those under one's direct command.

Twenty years of federal court rulings in the United States unambiguously show that an open declaration of homosexuality is *de facto* conduct, because it is a foolproof indicator of intent to commit sodomy, an illegal activity under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Of the 17,000 homosexual men and women mustered out of the U.S. Armed Services over the past ten years, not one has denied indulging in or planning to indulge in the proscribed behavior.

But back to the "other industrialized nations." The gay ban only recently fell in Canada and Australia. Canada knuckled under to a judge upholding the claim of a dismissed female soldier who admitted to having had a lesbian affair. In Australia, officials said that their ban was lifted in response to Clinton's publicized promise. So we now have the United States looking to one nation that mirrors our problems with an imperious judiciary and to another that is admittedly following what its leaders believe to be the American example. Which brings us to the folly of this whole business of comparing the United States military to that of other nations. Like it or not, we are the world's policeman. And international comparisons tend to be quite selective. For example, we are not supposed to buck a fictitious international lavender military tide. On the other hand, no other nation is thrusting women into combat roles, but such comparisons are deemed useless. The United States must lead the world in unisex innovation, even if it means drafting our mothers, wives, and daughters along with gays. As Dave Barry would say, I Am Not Making This Up, this stuff

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about drafting women. Navy Secretary Sean O'Keefe told midshipmen in Annapolis shortly before the Clinton *Anschluss* that women should perform combat roles in all the services and be "conscripted on an identical sociological basis as men." What a gentleman.

Speaking of gentlemen, Republican "opposition" to the Clinton plan consists of a bare majority within a minority. Some GOP senators have run for cover, trying to appease their enemies by vainly protesting that they are not "gay-bashers." Rather than oppose Clinton openly, many supported the safe idea of holding congressional hearings before Clinton issues his promised executive order on July 15.

The homosexual and feminist military agendas are one and the same. Both cite "equal opportunity" as the only relevancy. Sexual differences, no matter how stark, are trivialities to be smoothed over in sensitivity sessions like those the entire Navy endured courtesy of the Tailhook scandal and a spineless Navy brass. Like parents who choose a daycare center because it meets their own—not their child's—needs, the pansexualists have targeted the military not because lifting the ban will strengthen the nation's defense but because the military is the ideal vehicle for their larger agenda: open cultural acceptance of homosexuality and the elimination of Christianity from public life.

During Operation Desert Storm, the Gideons handed out one million New Testaments to troops slated for Middle East duty. Had the gay ban not been in place, the ACLU's Gay and Lesbian Project would have found a judge to invoke "equal protection" and ban distribution of this "oppressively homophobic" literature. Sensitivity training would have surely followed. Is there any reason to believe that a politically correct nation that orders its troops to conceal items such as crosses, Stars of David, and chaplain's insignias so as not to offend the people whose hides are being saved would not order its military to salute and then comply?

—*Robert Knight*

GAYS in the military is a hot topic with the American people. I know this firsthand, for in addition to my law practice and my duties as director of the Heartland Institute of Missouri, I host a Friday afternoon call-in show on a St. Louis radio station. WGNU, notorious in St. Louis for having been the first radio station with enough gall to broadcast the Major League Baseball games of a team other than the Cardinals (it carried the Harry Cary-era Chicago White Sox), is an all call-in station featuring a black separatist host in the morning and, in the evening, a *grande dame* retired fashion editor from the let-them-eat-cake school of conservative thought. Those of us with two-hour outposts in the middle of the day consequently receive quite a cross-section of thought. Thus, whenever there is unanimity on one of the issues of the day, I am naturally alarmed, but so it was when President Clinton announced that he would follow through on his pledge to lift the ban on openly gay members of the Armed Forces.

One caller maintained that soldiering would quickly become one of the stereotypical gay professions along with hairdressing and interior decorating. This was based on his reasoning that gays would soon be disproportionately represented in the military ranks, since many of them would find the idea of living in close quarters with young, sinewy, lonesome men "a pretty good idea." Another caller indicated that the "man in uniform" was already a prevalent fantasy in homosexual erotica and that "asking a homosexual if he'd like to serve in the Army was like asking me if I'd like to be the dressing-room attendant for the Folies-Bergère." Opposition to the idea was fierce, although there was agreement that any soldier who did not reveal his sexual preference to his fellow soldiers would pose no problem. In other words, no witch hunts, just a policy of keeping homosexual proclivities a secret between the soldier and the chaplain. And opposition to Mr. Clinton's plan spanned racial and gender lines, although one gentleman called in to say that women were not going to be as opposed to this as men, because women "just don't understand what that's like." (This idea left me wondering whether we males could seek membership in the "pro-choice" movement, decreeing that this is a "privacy right" of men that women are not allowed to comment on because they don't know what it's like to be a man. But I'm not holding my breath.)

This kind of backlash caught me by surprise. After all, this issue had surfaced during the campaign and everybody knew where Clinton stood, yet nobody mentioned anything then. In fact, if I had had to gauge the voters on this issue before the election, I would have said their attitude was one of: "Why are the Republicans bringing this up? They're just trying to shove this family values stuff down our throats. We don't want to hear about this. We want to hear about the real issues!" Yet now there's anger at Clinton and steadfast opposition to the change in policy.

Conclusion? All controversy about homosexuality, whether generated by the left or the right, furthers what is probably the number one point in the gay agenda: making homosexuality general parlor conversation and therefore eking out grams of acceptance. Voters, on the other hand, want to hear as little as possible about homosexuality. They resent whoever introduces the subject into the national forum, in a sense blaming the messenger. They don't want to hear Republicans or Democrats making noisy suggestions about changes in governmental policy with regard to homosexuals. They want the *status quo*.

—*Emmett McAuliffe*

THE BIG CHILL generation came bouncing into town with all of the hoopla you could imagine—bright, in-your-face articulate, self-righteous, and pompous enough to remind us that they were people more likely to be found in bus stations than in airports and that this, in itself, somehow demonstrated their moral superiority. During their second week in power, a waving White House aide yelled to reporters that they were on their way to "a Big Chill weekend" at Camp David. With an entourage of cabinet officials in tow they were out to show that they'd make governin' fun. The centerpiece of the movie *The Big Chill* is, of course, the music, the wonderful music that is perhaps the only thing about the 60's that should remain pure and wholly intact. Songs, unlike people, do not need to be tempered by time or rewritten by reality checks. *The Big Chill*, after all, is about disillusionment, a sadder-but-wiser coming-of-age party, best expressed by Mary Kay Place's character, a public defender whose ideals have been tarnished by the real criminals she has had to defend. "I didn't know they'd be so guilty," she says.

Many of us who are just a few years older than Bill Clinton and who have already had copious amounts of cold water

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thrown upon our 60's ideals are more than a little nervous that his coming-of-age has to occur in the White House. He still has that shoot-from-the-hip, laugh-at-the-elders quality that we once had until we learned about complexities, unintended consequences, and the limits of idealism. How other than flip immaturity, appealing in a rock star but scary in a President, can we view his statements that George Bush was cruel and callous to return a boatload of Haitians and that he, unlike Mr. Bush, was not obsessed with Saddam Hussein. How wonderfully simple. How perfectly 60's.

Those of us who have outgrown the 60's mind-set have usually been brought to cold reality by defendants who were guiltier than we thought, by employees who preferred government-sponsored vacations via unemployment compensation to work, by the devastation of young people on drugs, by a standardless educational system, and, in my own case, by tenants who were less like *Les Misérables* and more like creatures from *Pacific Heights*. Like George McGovern after owning a bed-and-breakfast inn, I have learned that small businesses can be smashed by well-intentioned but misguided government edicts. Proud that my family and I have created a business that now employs 40 people, I was angered by the continued pounding of small business owners by Democrats in general and by candidate Bill Clinton in particular when he denounced people like me for having "dumped their employees' health care on the rest of us." I felt excluded by the party of inclusion when they made business owners the Willie Hortons of 1992. The only small business owner mentioned by Jesse Jackson, who perhaps more than anyone could help his constituency by extolling the contributions and benefits of small business, was the owner of a chicken factory who burnt his employees to death by locking the back door.

George McGovern, for whom Clinton and I were both volunteers in 1972, may be able to tell President Clinton how quintessentially half-baked he sounds to the business community when he and Robert Reich make sanctimonious pronouncements that the minimum wage should be high enough to support a family of four. Anyone who has run a pizza shop for six months knows more about business than these Rhodes Scholars.

Perhaps President Clinton now realizes that the Haitian situation is a little murkier, a bit more morally ambiguous and fraught with consequences, than he had thought. When Haitians began tearing down their homes to build boats, things looked a little more complicated than just singing about huddled masses. Questions about the character of exiled President Aristide have arisen, accusations of his having "necklaced" people and having tried to kill Haiti's papal nuncio. Despite all of this, or perhaps oblivious to all of this, Mr. Clinton had promised that the United States government would restore President Aristide to power.

With a bit of dread, I suspect that there is one other prevailing myth that the 60's leftovers will need to unlearn. It is that the United States is not the sole evil-doer in the world. During the campaign, we heard a daily litany about what all the other civilized nations are doing. Mr. Clinton said our economy was "so bad that we had drug [*sic*] the whole world down with us." Even Saddam Hussein might be a warm fuzzy, smiling on the evening news, if it weren't for the United States and George Bush and our disgusting appetite for oil. Some of us who are no longer Blame-America-Firsters have discovered that there are bad guys in the world. We have even learned at least one thing from our old 60's nemesis, Richard Nixon. Nixon believed in the Madman Theory of scaring enemies into compliance with our version of world order.

Sadly, wisely, and morally compromised, President Clinton will probably learn, like those before him, that yesterday really is gone. That's what the Big Chill is all about.

—*Sarah J. McCarthy*

Downtown Manhattan is swarming with groups of educated, creative people bound to tell you who you are. Last year, for example, when I tried to catch the thriller *Basic Instinct* near Union Square, a gay group refused to let anyone see the film. They shut it down, by heaving stink bombs into the theater. Some of the group's female members shouted heterophobic slurs at women leaving the scene with men. ("Go home and fake some orgasms!") One of the group's male leaders asked me my sexual orientation. When I bristled at the idea of labeling myself, he stamped me a closet homosexual. Last October, Pennsylvania Governor Robert Casey made the mistake of going downtown to give a talk on his opposition to abortion. Casey got told who he was, and where he could go.

The downtown mentality is largely responsible for the fact that New York can no longer be taken seriously as a cultural center. Major cities traditionally attracted people who, fed up with imposed identities and labels, wanted to create themselves. Farm boys and girls sought to tear loose from the soil and the tyranny of the elements. Small-town kids broke away from religious authority and provincial pettiness. I can remember, growing up in a small town, the pecking order enforced with building blocks as early as kindergarten. In a town like mine, you were usually no more than the sum of your father's assets.

In our increasingly ghettoized society, young people come to New York for reasons opposite to those of their forebears. They seek to escape the freedom of prosperous, tolerant youth in places like Connecticut and Ohio. In New York, they will join a "community" of equally intolerant middle- and upper-middle-class "artists," "poets," and "writers." These creative young people can then embrace stultifying, one-dimensional identities and impose them on outsiders, with jackboots. There is much talk about the oppressed "other," but it's really about a tyrannical "self."

The creative output of these anti-Bohemians comes always with a tag and a loyalty oath: the "gay" play (on AIDS and homophobia); the "feminist" poem (on those evil, straight, white males); the "black" short story (the 20th spinoff of *Boyz N the Hood*). The characters are made out of cardboard, the plots are boiler-plate work, the language a series of clichés and slogans.

Downtown, particularly the Little Berlin of the East Village, is an outgrowth of the 1960's New Left politics and avant-garde. The former embraced certain groups based on their racial and sexual identity, while the other degenerated into a fight against all restraint. The result of such cultural slumming was that some groups received carte blanche to say or do anything they wished, including breaking the law, while oppressing the rest of the citizenry. The irony of today's Greenwich Village is in its meeting of supposed opposites: it is patrolled by black-clad skinheads—gay-bashers and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

violent gays alike.

The psychological basis of the creative life is in transcending the tunnel vision of labels and identities, and in abstaining from the comforts of communal membership. A true artist *seeks out* people who are different: nothing human is alien. That cop guarding Tompkins Square Park during curfew hours is for the artist a possible subject or character—not through projecting hang-ups and prejudices on him (or slugging him), but in finding out what makes him tick.

Much of the affected rage of today's "artists" does not have its source in what they claim to oppose: oppression, censorship, homophobia, and philistinism. Theirs is the anger of people who have fought against all constraint and won. Now they find themselves with only their shared mediocrity and the arrogance of power for company.

During a similar time of upheaval and romantic *Schwärmerei* in Weimar Germany, a writer attacked such narcissism at its roots. The writer saw himself locked in mortal struggle between two selves: a mediocre, constricted bourgeois and a murderous, spontaneous wolf. If the false dichotomy of the bourgeois and the wolf had prevailed, the writer as wolf would have slit his own throat, killing both antagonists. Instead, he came to see dozens, even thousands of alternative selves in the mirror.

The writer was Hermann Hesse; the book was *Steppenwolf*, published in 1927. The few contemporary New York artists who are going to amount to anything will be those who are able to see beyond the steppenwolf in the mirror.

—*Nicholas Stix*

THE BABY-BOOMER generation (heard that phrase much lately?) has now taken over government, along with everything else, and what a spectacle this turn of events provides us. If we use boomer members of the dominant media culture as a model for the generation's sensibilities, and use the dominant media culture's reaction to Bill Clinton as a reflection of boomer values, what have we learned during the past year about Bill Clinton, baby boomers, and the dominant media culture? My fellow Americans, we've learned that all three need to get a grip.

Baby boomers have been described, by boomers themselves and not without pride, as the most self-obsessed generation in history, the very assertion of which is proof of the claim. One characteristic of self-obsession is psychological projection, and boomers, via their media representatives, projected everything onto an ever-willing, ever-recipient Bill Clinton: their emotional vanity (read *sensitivity*), their intellectual conceit (read *brilliance*), and their moral expediency (read *realism*).

During the presidential campaign, journalists—male journalists—wrote about Bill Clinton like high-schoolers with crushes: limp with infatuation. It was all rather shocking until one realized it wasn't journalism being practiced here; it was self-worship once removed. It wasn't enough for the media elite to justify Clinton's past behavior; they had to elevate it. His draft-dodging was presented as an act of conscience, his adultery as nothing less than proof of emotional honesty. Who, the implied question went, hasn't committed adultery, or wanted to? Such moral contortions were necessary because they were the only means by which Clinton could be said to possess "character." And he *had* to have character, otherwise all the draft-dodging adulterers in the press would be unable to live with themselves.

And on it went. During inaugural week, when Clinton was moved to tears by the likes of Goldie Hawn, nobody questioned his taste, much less his sensitivity threshold. How cool it was that we now had a national leader who knew the words to "We Are the World" and was comfortable dueting with Michael Jackson. (OK, how *should* a President come across at such moments? He should be unfailingly gracious, slightly uncomfortable, faintly above it all—a good sport. He should not seem *at home* in the proceedings.) Here at last, we were told, was a President whose choice of personal icons evidenced both a sense of history and the common touch. Clinton's icons were John Kennedy and Elvis Presley, and no one was quite sure which was the sense-of-history icon and which the common-touch, but what did it matter? It was all so *symbolic*.

The question now is, how long will the lovefest last? Well, hearts are breaking and minds are changing even as we speak. Media boomers are fickle, and since their investment in Clinton was based on symbolism rather than principle, their inevitable disappointment will engender not a sense of betrayal but—far worse for the self-obsessed—a wave of embarrassment. The boom-booms are in for trouble, but they won't suffer alone. They will take Bill Clinton down with them. Let us predict how it will happen.

First, they will be furious that they were ever charmed by that dumb saxophone. Then they will discover—as if for the first time, since nothing counts until they believe it—what most folks already know: that intelligence isn't intellect, intellect isn't wisdom, and rhetoric isn't leadership. That words count and habitual verbal hair-splitting is acceptable only in courtrooms. That hypocrisy can be termed pragmatism only so many times. That when everything is symbolic, nothing is real. That emotiveness is emotion on the cheap. They will decide that it is unseemly for a President to be so chronically *affectable* and tacky for the leader of the free world to have as his desktop slogan "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow." (Yech. Why not "Today is the first day of the rest of your life"?) They will discover, yes, that Clinton has no style, mainly because he has no wit. For all his public affability, he takes himself very seriously, as do the media boomers (what else does *self-obsessed* mean?), and they will become uneasy with the humorless reflection they see in the White House.

Finally, this great collection of boomer reps will realize where they have seen Bill Clinton before: he's the guy with the glossy smile and hip haircut who does the local news. Then they'll say they knew it all along.

—*Janet Scott Barlow*

OBITER DICTA: Our friends and contributors have been busy as usual. "The New American Politics Meets the New Europe" conference, organized by *Chronicles* with a grant from the Earhart Foundation, brought 13 scholars and journalists and a small number of observers together the weekend of March 26-28 to examine the rise of nationalist and secessionist movements in the post-Cold War era. Discussions centered around questions of identity, multiculturalism, and national vs. federal models of political organization and laid a framework for further exchange as current trends in Europe and the United States evolve.

On April 1, The Rockford Institute and Republican Representative Don Manzullo of Illinois hosted a reception

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on Capitol Hill to announce the May issue of *Chronicles*, which—as readers will remember—focused on foreign lobbying. The principal essayists for the issue were all present to offer brief remarks to key members of Congress and the media.

Chilton Williamson, Jr., senior editor for books at *Chronicles*, participated in a Liberty Fund conference entitled "Liberty and Individualism in Western Literature" from April 15-18 in Jackson, Wyoming. And Harold O.J. Brown, director of The Rockford Institute Center on Religion and Society and editor of the *Religion and Society Report*, is helping to organize the Fifteenth Annual International Seminar on Theology and Human Rights, with special emphasis on the right to life, to be held in conjunction with the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, from July 1-31.

Last, just out from the University of South Carolina Press is *That's What I Like (About the South), And Other New Southern Stories for the Nineties*, edited by George P. Garrett (a contributing editor of *Chronicles* and recipient of the 1989 Ingersoll T.S. Eliot Award for Creative Writing) and Paul Ruffin (professor of English at Sam Houston State University and founding editor of the *Texas Review*). Featuring such authors as Fred Chappell and Madison Smartt Bell, this gathering of 31 stories grew out of a *Texas Review* competition to find and publish outstanding new Southern fiction. It is, as David R. Slavitt writes, "further evidence of the continuing vitality, and centrality, of regional culture in America."

Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

A Perpetual Censor

When Supreme Court Justice Byron White announced his retirement from public life in March of this year, a shudder rippled down the spines of Washington conservatives. Previously, when one or another of the Court's Nameless Nine had declared his intention to quit the pleasures of wrecking the laws and customs of local communities he had never heard of and spend his remaining years improving his golf game, the Beltway Right had rubbed its hands in glee. Every new vacancy on the Court meant an opportunity to plug one of its own *eruditi* into the empty socket of American jurisprudence, and even if the Senate Judiciary Committee thwarted its plans and succeeded in ruining each conservative nominee's reputation by exposing him as a rake, a reactionary, or a scholar who had had too many ideas, there still remained a bottomless pit of money to be raised and volumes of articles to be scribbled on the subject of the unfairness and hypocrisy of it all.

Yet, with the exception of Robert Bork, all of the Republican nominees to the Court in the 1980's were confirmed, and by the end of the decade one would have expected a genuine legal counterrevolution to have been triumphant or well under way. The last major decision of the Court in the Reagan-Bush era, however, was a signal failure to overturn the 1973 *Roe* v. *Wade* ruling by which a right to abortion had suddenly been discovered glimmering in the shadowy bottoms of the constitutional text, and since no small part of the conservative reaction against "judicial activism" was generated by outrage over the Roe decision, the inability of conservative legal hounds to bring it to bay must be chalked up as one more blind alley down which the Reagan Revolution blundered. Indeed, the reason conservative spines should tingle when incumbent justices contemplate retirement nowadays is that the Republican ascendancy of the 1980's did virtually nothing to diminish the swollen power that the Court has grabbed for itself throughout this century. Hence, when King Bill and his consort replace retiring Justices with the obscurities, misfits, and malcontents whom we must expect them to choose, the new Solomons will receive intact almost all of the power that their predecessors accumulated and that the Republicans and their appointees did nothing to dismantle. Of course, the Court did sway a bit to the right under the influence of the Republican appointments, but at no time did the Reagan-Bush justices seriously seek to reverse and reduce the grandiose pretensions of the Court's power or undo the damage inflicted on the Republic by Earl Warren and his colleagues.

The premise of the Warren revolution and the ruin it made of the Republic was the dogma handed down from the 1920's through the 1940's known as the "Incorporation Doctrine," according to which the Bill of Rights is "incorporated" within the meaning of the 14th Amendment. Originally intended as a series of limitations on the federal government, the Bill of Rights, as illuminated by the Incorporation Doctrine, has evolved into a constraint on state and local powers and an anvil on which legal and judicial elites can sledgehammer local and state laws and procedures that stand in the way of their political preferences. Legal scholar Paul Murphy, a champion of Warren and his works, actually acknowledges the transparently political baggage that the former Chief Justice successfully snuck under the constitutional tent. Warren, writes Murphy, "utilized the judiciary as a constructive policymaking instrument in a wide range of areas. Intent more upon social ends than upon legal subtleties and refinements, and candidly prepared to say so, he had pushed the nation, through his Court's legal rulings, to take public actions that Congress was unprepared to recommend and the executive was incapable, unilaterally, of effectively securing."

In other words, since voters and their elected representatives persisted in the nasty habit of repulsing the legalistic hurricanes that continuously erupt from the nervous systems of the ACLU, the NAACP, labor unions, and communist front groups, it was left up to the valor and ingenuity of such decrepit apostles of progress as Warren himself, Harry Blackmun, the late Thurgood Marshall, William O. Douglas, and William Brennan to fob off on states and cities the "true meaning" of the Constitution as discerned by these sages, and the Incorporation Doctrine was the principal tool by which they did so. As conservative le-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gal scholar Douglas Bradford expressed it in an article in the journal *This World* last year, "upon this rock [of the Incorporation Doctrine] rests the authority of the federal judiciary to oversee busing, quotas, school district boundaries, abortion, Miranda warnings, probable cause for arrest, prison and asylum standards, libel, pornography, subversive speech, and the separation of church and state." In the absence of the Incorporation Doctrine, that is, there would in fact be virtually no enduring liberalism in the United States, and the grotesque failure of the "Reagan Revolution" is nowhere more glaringly exhibited than in the inability and perhaps the unwillingness of its Court appointees to challenge this doctrine. Indeed, there now flourishes a school of neoconservative jurisprudence that is actually committed to endorsing and keeping the Incorporation Doctrine in one form or another.

The ostensible reason certain conservatives are drawn to the Incorporation Doctrine is that it seems to offer them an opportunity to encode in the Constitution what they take to be fundamental rights of property and economic enterprise and the protection of a free-market economy. Their views are largely drawn from late 19th-century jurisprudence, when the 14th Amendment was conscripted by the conservative jurists of the Gilded Age to buttress "substantive due process." Under this interpretation, the Amendment's prohibition of a state depriving "any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law" is extended to the substance of what legislatures do, not merely to the procedures by which the laws operate. As legal historian Melvin Urofsky explains the distinction, "Procedural due process . . . regulates the courts and constitutes the rules of the game; substantive due process regulates the legislature and *is* the game." By claiming that the 14th Amendment dictates what legislatures may do, the concept of substantive due process essentially brings state legislatures (as well as city and county governments) under the control of the federal courts.

The value of substantive due process as understood through an expansive view of the 14th Amendment to defenders of free enterprise comes mainly from its application to local and state licensing laws. The leading Court rulings in this field remain the 1873 "Slaughterhouse Cases," in which the Court narrowly upheld (thereby rejecting substantive due process claims) a Louisiana statute that limited the location of slaughterhouses to certain areas of New Orleans. Butchers outside the area challenged the law on the ground that it violated their right to exercise their trade as guaranteed in the 13th and 14th Amendments and the 1866 Civil Rights Act. Justice Samuel Miller, speaking for the five-vote majority on the Court, rejected their argument, stating that to use the 14th Amendment to authorize federal protection of individual rights within and against the states would "fetter and degrade the State governments by subjecting them to the control of Congress" and would "constitute this court a perpetual censor upon all legislation of the States."

Miller's view prevailed, but not for long. By the 1890's, the idea of using substantive due process to resist efforts of Progressivist reformers to regulate business at the local level had proved too useful for the judicial defenders of laissez-faire to resist, even at the expense of sacrificing federalism. Up through the 1930's, when conservative Justices used it to resist Wilsonian and Rooseveltian attempts to regulate the economy, the substantive due process view prevailed, until Roosevelt's own political manipulation of the Court allowed it to be replaced, at least for economic purposes.

Although the legal reasoning by which substantive due process is applied to economic cases differs from that by which the Incorporation Doctrine was developed, the effects are essentially the same. In both, a branch of the federal government—the Supreme Court—dictates what state legislatures may and may not do, and in both, the 14th Amendment is invoked as a basis for this expansion of federal power and the corresponding diminution of state and local authority.

Today the principal exponent of reviving substantive due process reasoning in economic liberty cases is Professor Richard Epstein of the University of Chicago, but while Professor Epstein is involved largely in the theoretical elaboration of the argument, the main pioneer of this school on a practical level has been Clint Bolick of the Landmark Legal Foundation and more recently of the Washington-based Institute for Justice. Mr. Bolick and his attorneys have mainly sought to use substantive due process arguments to oppose local licensing laws that they claim violate citizens' rights to engage in private enterprise. Thus, they have supported litigation aimed at overturning Washington, D.C., licensing laws banning bootblacks from city sidewalks and a Houston, Texas, law that banned jitneys because of their competition with local streetcar companies. In these and similar cases, Bolick argues that such laws are also racially discriminatory, since they usually have the effect of pushing out black competitors in favor of white businesses and since they were often passed in the first place for precisely that purpose.

The specific results of Mr. Bolick's efforts—overturning obsolete or irrational licensing laws that restrict competition—are no doubt commendable, but, like the original substantive due process cases, their effects on conservative legal strategy in the longer term are likely to be pernicious. Reliance on the Incorporation Doctrine and substantive due process theory by conservatives contradicts and weakens whatever efforts the right might make against the use of these same principles by the left, and if the legal history of this century proves anything, it is that the left will be the ultimate beneficiary of any centralized legal system and the principles that support it. There is no way decisions such as *Roe* v. *Wade* or similar rulings on prayer in schools, burning the flag, obscenity, civil rights, or entire casebooks of other victories for legal liberalism, can flourish without the kind of interpretation that the left has imposed on the 14th Amendment and that Professor Epstein, Mr. Bolick and his colleagues, and their adherents are zealous to perpetuate.

Local licensing laws, moreover, may have few economic merits, though in the original Slaughterhouse Cases the purpose of the law was to protect public health against the disease that accompanies the professional slaughter of cattle. The fact is that states and local communities may have any number of perfectly valid and legitimate reasons for enacting legislation limiting local enterprises, and certainly the approval or disapproval of nine men in Washington (or of political ideologues in universities and foundations) should have nothing to do with how communities govern themselves.

The whole point of the U.S. Constitution as it was originally written and adopted was to enable the people of one of the world's largest and most diverse countries to govern themselves without

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coming under the centralized dominance of a particular interest, faction, or region. Throughout American history, it has been that very feature of the Constitution that has so profoundly offended and alarmed the legions of those armed with a Better Idea —High Federalists, abolitionists, Social Darwinists of the Gilded Age, Wilsonian apostles of the New Freedom, Rooseveltian peddlers of the New Deal, New Frontiersmen, Great Society social engineers, lunch-counter liberators, civil-liberties Stalinists, abortionists, common criminals, and overeducated freethinkers who feel oppressed because someone can read the Ten Commandments on a school bulletin board. Each and every one of them has sought to gut the dispersion of political power promised in the old Constitution and tried to get the *federales* on his or her side, usually by wheedling the branch of the federal government least responsive to the voters into forcing everybody else to conform to his or her hobbies and obsessions.

What has stood between these platoons of crackpots and crusaders and the ordered way of life most Americans prefer to follow has not been the presidency, the Supreme Court, Congress, the news media, churches, or big business, and certainly not any "conservative movement" headquartered on K Street or Capitol Hill. What has resisted them has been the American people themselves, organized and represented in decentralized local institutions of government at the levels of county, town, and state, and their resistance has been overcome only when their enemies have captured the Supreme Court and turned it into a political weapon to advance their pet causes. If Americans are going to recapture their country, they'll have to do so by stripping the Court of the powers it has seized under such fictions as the Incorporation Doctrine and substantive due process, dismantling the Court's appointment of itself as the "perpetual censor upon all legislation of the States" that Justice Miller warned against, and preventing the exploitation of Court and Constitution as the "constructive policy-making instruments" into which Earl Warren transmuted them. So far, the Reagan Revolutionaries and their tax-exempt allies in the Beltway Right have shown little capacity to accomplish that counterrevolution and precious little interest in even trying. C

THE WISDOM OF THE PLANNED GIFT

There are many ways to give to educational and charitable organizations such as The Rockford Institute, publisher of *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*. Most people make direct gifts, which result in a "charitable deduction" from their taxable incomes.

Another option is to establish a **Charitable Remainder Trust**. Assume, for example, that a person bought stock years ago at a cost of $20,000 that is now worth $50,000 and pays 3 percent in dividends. One way to lock in the current value, avoid capital gains tax, and derive more income would be to create a **Charitable Remainder Unitrust**. Pay-out percentages could be set at from 5 percent to 8 percent, and the funds placed in secure income-producing investments. If the trust earns more than the agreed pay-out, the additional money is added to the trust so that its size increases. Upon the death of the donor or his beneficiary, the trust would become the property of the Institute or other charities of the donor's choice. Estate taxes are eliminated and there is a sizable charitable deduction in the year the trust is established. The amount of the charitable deduction depends on the age of the donor and the income retained.

Michael Warder, Legacy Program, The Rockford Institute, 934 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103

☐ Please send me general information on "Planned Giving" options.
☐ Please send me information on the Institute's **Charitable Remainder Trust Fund**.

NAME_____ ADDRESS_____

CITY_____ STATE_____ ZIP_____ PHONE_____

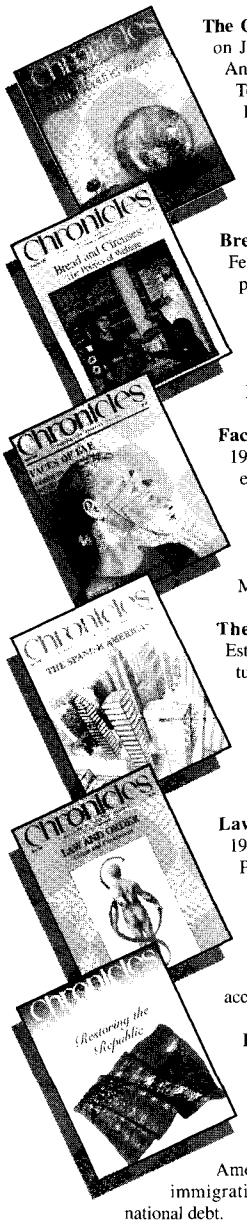
If you have a specific asset, such as stocks, that you are considering for a contribution, and if you would like the Institute to evaluate the financial tax implications for your gift, please include the following information:

SS #_____ SS # (SPOUSE)_____

COST OF ASSET_____ ESTIMATED MARKET VALUE_____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1992 IN REVIEW



The Coming Wrath—January 1992—Samuel Francis on James Burnham and the managerial revolution, Andrei Navrozov on democracy and dictatorship, Tomislav Sunic on the future of nationalism, and Harold O.J. Brown on the prophecies of Pitirim Sorokin. Plus Chilton Williamson, Jr., on Deep Ecology, William Grigg on the case against the Boy Scouts, and Anne Marie Morgan on the bureaucracy of getting married.

Bread and Circuses: The Politics of Welfare—February 1992—Allan Carlson on how federal housing policies have contributed to the breakup of the family, William Murchison on the doctor and the state, and Christina F. Jeffrey on Social Security as family policy. Plus Barbara McCarthy on welfare and illegal immigration, and Jeffrey Tucker on Housing and Urban Development.

Faces of Eve: Goddess, Starlet, Poetess—March 1992—Janet Scott Barlow on the devolution of women on the screen, Thomas Fleming on marriage as the real right to privacy, and R.S. Gwynn on American women poets. Plus Betsy Clarke on the politics of rape, Anne Marie Morgan on the new technology of fertility control, and Kenneth Craycraft on Mary Ann Glendon's *Rights Talk.*

The Spanish Americas—April 1992—Richard Estrada on the Hispanic contributions to American culture, Mario Vargas Llosa on the difficult rise of the Latin American novel, Chilton Williamson, Jr., on bullfighting in Juárez, Mexico, and poems by Jorge Luis Borges. Plus Brad Linaweaver on Albert Jay Nock, William Murchison on LBJ, and Murray Rothbard on violence in New York City.

Law and Order: Crime and Punishment—May 1992—Thomas Fleming on the role of the executioner, Philip Jenkins on the drug war and personal liberties, Graeme Newman on the case for corporal punishment, and Theodore Pappas on vigilante justice. Plus Murray Rothbard on street crime, Llewellyn Rockwell on vagrancy law, Richard Irving on taxi drivers and minority crime, and a firsthand account of life in prison.

Restoring the Republic—June 1992—Clyde Wilson on the republican approach, Samuel Francis on the nationalist approach, and E. Christian Kopff on the Augustan compromise. Plus Thomas Fleming on why we have the government we deserve, Theodore Pappas on Japanese-American trade, Chilton Williamson, Jr., on illegal immigration, and Murray Rothbard on repudiating the national debt.

Citizenship—July 1992—John Lukacs on patriotism, Richard D. Lamm on why great nations need great citizens, Richard Flathman on four models of citizenship, and Peter Schuck and Rogers Smith on why citizenship should be based on consent and not birth. Plus Thomas Fleming on the rebirth of nationalism, and Samuel Francis on the Buchanan Revolution.

Reactionary Modernism—August 1992—Thomas Molnar on Céline and French reactionary modernism, Peter J. Stanlis on Robert Frost, J.O. Tate on Wyndham Lewis, and Larry Woiwode on Dos Passos. Plus David R. Slavitt on the novels of 1991, Justin Raimondo on Ayn Rand as plagiarist, Bill Kauffman on Sinclair Lewis, and Chilton Williamson, Jr.'s review of R. Emmett Tyrrell's *The Conservative Crack-Up.*

Rotten to the Core: American Colleges—September 1992—Thomas Fleming on literature and the curriculum debate, Robert Weissberg on the life of a campus conservative, E. Christian Kopff on a true classical curriculum, and student reports on political correctness at the University of Florida, Grinnell College, and Georgetown University. Plus Laura Rogers' exposé of the Parents as Teachers program.

1492: Italians and America—October 1992—Christie Davies on blaming Columbus, E. Christian Kopff on Margaret Fuller in Rome, Chilton Williamson, Jr., on pseudoscholarship about Columbus, and Samuel Francis on *The Godfather* as political metaphor. Plus Thomas Fleming on the changing frontier, David R. Slavitt on Lorenzo Da Ponte, and Thomas O. Jones on Columbus' descendants.

Ain't Freedom Grand: The 1992 Election—November 1992—Donald Warren on the empty voting booth, William J. Quirk on the unrepresented middle class, Thomas Fleming on the Electoral College, James S. Fishkin on deliberative polling, and Samuel Francis on the passivity of the electorate. Plus Allan Carlson on proportional representation, and Theodore Pappas on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s early plagiarisms.

Ten Commandments—December 1992—A round-table discussion on the Decalogue—by Thomas Molnar, Gary North, Frank W. Brownlow, Allan Carlson, Jacob Neusner, Theodore Pappas, Murray Rothbard, E. Christian Kopff, Harold O.J. Brown, and George Garrett. Plus Philip Jenkins on the panic over priestly pedophilia, Sally Wright on Malcolm Muggeridge, and William Wilson on C.S. Lewis.

BACK ISSUE ORDER FORM

1 to 4 issues $5.00 each; 5 to 9 issues $3.00 each (postage & handling included);
10 or more issues $2.00 each (postage billed separately)

Date	Qty.	Cost	Date	Qty.	Cost
January 1992			July 1992		
February 1992			August 1992		
March 1992			September 1992		
April 1992			October 1992		
May 1992			November 1992		
June 1992			December 1992		

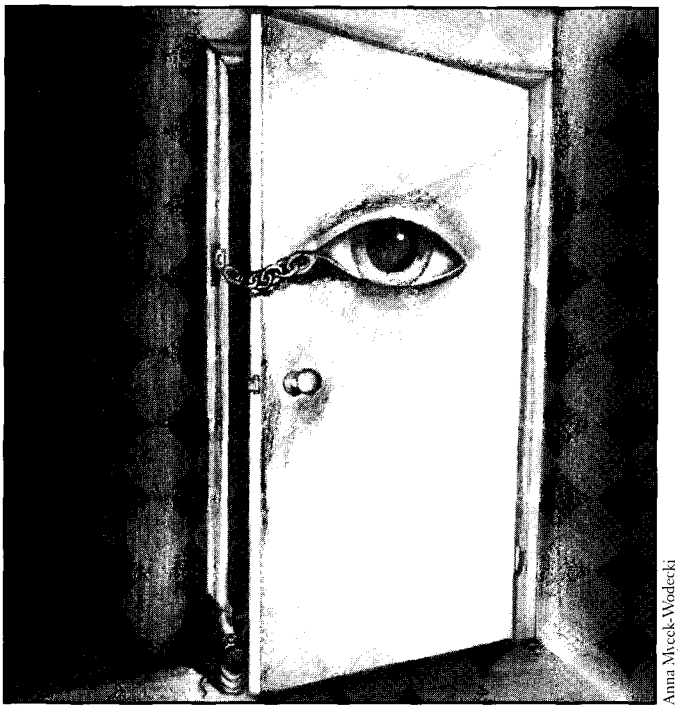
Total Enclosed $ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Mail with check to: Chronicles * 934 North Main Street * Rockford, Illinois 61103

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Mind Your Own Business

by Thomas Fleming

The murder of abortionist David Gunn in March of this year ought to sharpen the focus of the national debate on abortion, although partisans on both sides may be slow in getting the point. The *New York Times*, in a ponderous exercise of soft journalism, portrayed the event as a study in character contrasts. Michael Griffin, who according to police confessed to the crime, is a "loner with a bad temper." A Pentacostalist who joined an extremist abortion protest group, Griffin was having marital troubles. In other words, he is the sort of dispossessed misfit that characterizes right-wing protest movements.

Dr. Gunn, on the other hand, is described by friends and relatives as a gentle and compassionate man who loved children. A member of the Church of Christ—a sect opposed to abortion—Gunn gave up his private practice and devoted himself full-time to terminating the lives of unborn children. One pro-abortion activist described him as a "laid-back 60's kind of guy" who was "thrilled that Clinton had been elected." But if Mr. Griffin was having trouble holding his marriage together, Gunn had already been through two marriages and was "seeing" a practical nurse who plies the same grisly trade. The family that slays together . . .

This is a study in contrasts but not of the type the *Times* imagines. Griffin, if we can believe the newspapers, is a passionate man on the edge, a man of limited understanding who wanted to do what was right. Gunn, on the other hand, was the classic 60's refugee: a hypocrite who said he was proud of his work but never told his parents anything about it. Although his friends spoke of the sacrifices and efforts Gunn had made for the cause, the truth may be simpler. For an unambitious physician, it is easier to make a living by taking lives than by saving them. Of course the money is usually less than in private practice, but so is the responsibility. Real doctors usually have to worry about losing patients, but for the abortionist, that is the whole point.

From the Christian perspective, from the perspective of the doctor's own church, David Gunn was a killer who deserved to die long ago. From the same perspective, Michael Griffin should be executed for committing a first-degree murder without a scintilla of justification for his crime.

But if Dr. Gunn deserved to die, why was it wrong to kill him? That question, I fear, is secretly being asked by many activists in the life movement. After all, some of them have been regularly engaging in noisy protests, blocking entrances to private businesses, storming abortion facilities to destroy equipment. In previous discussions of abortion, I warned the extremists that crimes against property would lead to crimes against life itself, and although David Gunn may be the first abortionist to be murdered by a pro-life activist, he is only one of many to have received death threats.

Christian activists who engage in acts of civil disobedience think they can draw a sharp line between crimes against property and crimes against persons, between destruction of things and destruction of life. Some of them are even against the death penalty, a position that is entirely at odds with both Scripture and tradition. There is no seamless garment, as some Catholics like to pretend, that can be fitted upon inno-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cent children and the devils who rape and murder them. I suppose it is a clever dodge that enables a liberal theologian to oppose abortion without forfeiting his status as an intellectual. "See, it's not just babies I'm defending but everyone and (why not?) everything."

But if life is a sacred, albeit revocable gift from the Creator, a man can do worse things than take someone's life. There are teachers and theologians who systematically corrupt the innocent; there are ministers and social workers who abuse their authority to seduce the young. It would not, in fact, be difficult to draw up a long list of pornographers, drug-dealers, slum lords, counselors, and tax collectors beside whom a simple murderer, who kills in a moment of passion, looks like an honorable man. "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" (Mark 9:42).

The pro-life fanatics are driven by the fallacious and un-Christian assumption that mere life is everything. It is not, at least not for Christians. The abortionists' cynical appeal to "the quality of life" would be, for Christians, a true argument. Better to die in the faith than to live in apostasy, and for the seducers and betrayers who delude simple people into thinking of abortion as a way out of their difficulties, it is better for them never to have been born. They are worse than dead, and they shall suffer worse, many of them even before they die.

If I believe this is so, that abortion doctors and propagandists are worse than murderers, why is it wrong to kill them? I do not say that. If we lived in a free country, in which a state was allowed to recriminalize abortion and to do to physicians what they have done to others, I would cheerfully consign the whole lot of them to the firing squad—or something worse, along with the journalists, feminists, and lawyers who make their dirty business possible.

Since abortion will never be recriminalized in my lifetime, what redress do we have? By "we" I include the father and grandparents of babies whose mother was pressured into having an abortion in a moment of panic. I also include the mothers, if and when they repent of their folly. Let us set aside the complexities for a moment and consider the simplest scenario: a pregnant but unwed girl whose high school counselor refers her to an abortion clinic. The girl is scared, but she thinks abortion is probably a bad thing; nevertheless, the counselors and doctors talk her into it. A few months later, filled with remorse, she tells her fiancé and father, who file a legal complaint. Their rights in the matter, after all, were never consulted. Nothing is done, and one afternoon the two men terminate the lives of the counselors and the physicians.

While I do not recommend such an action to anyone, I cannot condemn it either. If the law will not protect us and vindicate our rights, we may do it ourselves, even if that means making ourselves the victims of a corrupt and oppressive legal system. We may also, for very good reasons, choose not to shoulder our natural obligation to protect our kin and avenge their murder, but when the law is itself unjust, it cannot bind our conscience.

This is not, please note, a doctrine of civil disobedience. It is the law of blood, a law that precedes all political and legal systems, the principle that is their foundation. The state exists to protect us from violence, but when the state is the accessory to murder, we are free—I would say obliged—to take the justice that the state refuses to give.

The power to exact justice can only be reassumed by an individual who is either a victim or his protector. There is no evidence that Mr. Griffin or his family were the victims of David Gunn's ministrations. Like many would-be rescuers of unborn children, he was standing up for a cause in which he had no personal stake. The defense of life is a principle, they argue, that transcends statutes, legislatures, and judges. If the law protects the property—and, so it would seem, persons—of murderers, then "the law is a ass," which for conscience's sake they must publicly defy. Whenever a traditional Christian brings up scriptural injunctions to obedience, they set those aside in favor of a higher law.

We are not called upon to lead other people's lives for them, to make their choices, to keep them from folly, and it would be a vain religion or a merely academic philosophy that preached such a doctrine.

The most frequently heard defense of civil disobedience in these cases is a sloppy bit of casuistry that goes like this: if your neighbor were drowning in his bathtub, surely it would be permissible to kick in his door to rescue him. They conclude from this that one may break a good law protecting property in order to protest the bad law that legalizes abortion. On these grounds, one would be free to play Robin Hood, robbing from the rich in order to give to the poor, or to slander an enemy of the church or to seduce a rich widow who might contribute her late husband's life savings to the building fund. "Let us do evil that good may come." St. Paul gave the answer to that one long ago.

God has the power to make good come out of evil, but man may not knowingly do evil in the expectation that it will lead to good. Like so many of the most corrosive sins, acts of civil disobedience are undertaken in rebellion against the God who has established authority for our own good, and—what is worse—they represent an arrogant assumption, a usurpation of a power that belongs only to the Creator and not to the created. In playing God, the civil disobedient—whether he is working for minority rights or for the rights of unborn children—is following the advice of the serpent who told Adam and Eve they could be as gods, and the pop theologians and self-ordained religious leaders who inspired Mr. Griffin are no less guilty than the journalists and judges who have made abortion a fashionable form of birth control. Both have corrupted the hearts and minds of simple people, and both have earned the millstone.

If anti-abortion activists want to save lives, if they are actually so concerned with the mere fact of a million or so babies being killed every year, they might better spend their time feeding the world's hungry or improving health care in Africa. Closer to home, they could form vigilante groups and clean out the rats' nests that harbor the thugs and muggers who terrorize American cities. Better still, they could target and eliminate

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all the killers that are turned loose by the legal system. The results would be, in sheer quantity, thousands of times more successful than their rescue missions.

It goes without saying that I am opposed to all of the above and all for the same reason. It is no part of Christian doctrine or of the older ethics that a man should undertake the problems of strangers. We are obliged to take care of our children and our aged parents; to cherish our wives (or husbands) and be faithful to them; to take care of the widows and orphans in our community; and to care for the poor, the hungry, and the sick that come to our attention. Of course we can in good faith commit trespass to save our neighbor's life, precisely because he is our neighbor, and because we would be doing what he actually wants us to do. But we should not be justified in breaking down his door to preach the gospel to his children or in going about the world as "house-breakers for Christ." Jesus praised the Samaritan who took care of a robbery victim as a good neighbor, but he did not tell us to abandon our primary responsibilities in a quest for victims all over the world.

Most of us, as individuals, are barely able to live up to the obligations of everyday life, and the attempt to shoulder responsibilities for the entire world, while it may on rare occasions raise a man to sainthood, will more often make him descend to something lower than the merely human. The practitioner of what Dickens called "telescopic philanthropy" devotes her energies to the natives of Borrioboola Gha, while neglecting her own children. Who is minding the children, I wonder, of all those right-to-lifers who devote themselves to protesting the deaths of other people's children? Some of them are demonstrating with their parents; others are rotting their brains in public schools. In either case, mother might better occupy her time in taking care of them and attending to their education. We are not called upon to lead other people's lives for them, to make their choices, to keep them from folly, and it would be a vain religion or a merely academic philosophy that preached such a doctrine.

Before the 20th century, the concept of universal obligation was embraced by only a handful of visionaries, and a good part of the whole duty of man consisted of minding one's business. In that land of "once upon a time," the duties of ordinary people were restricted to the tiny sphere of everyday life. It was enough to take care of our own, to be as fair as we knew how in all our dealings, and to be loyal to our country and to the gods. In his usual platitudinous manner, Plutarch said that the object of teaching moral philosophy to children was to enable them to learn basic responsibilities:

> what is good and what is base, what is just and what unjust, what generally is to be chosen and what avoided; how one ought to deal with the gods, with his parents, with his elders, with the laws, with strangers, with rulers, with friends, with women, with children, with servants; that one must revere the gods, honor one's parents, respect one's elders, obey the laws, give way to rulers, love one's friends, exercise restraint toward women, be affectionate with children, and not mistreat slaves.

It was the common opinion of ancient peoples that there are specific duties, arising out of one's station in life, owed to neighbors, relatives, friends, and political allies. Greeks and Romans, Jews and Assyrians all made the obvious distinctions between neighbors and strangers, kin and nonkin, compatriots and aliens, noble and base-born, and—most sweeping—between friends and enemies. Prohibitions on theft and killing applied to friends and compatriots within a society and not, necessarily, to strangers. Piracy and brigandage were honorable occupations among early Greeks, and it is not rude when strangers ask the wandering Odysseus if he is a pirate.

Greek poetry and proverbs make it clear that universal benevolence was not the Greek ideal. Friends were expected to assist each other in a variety of ways, but as a famous line of Archilochus put it, "I know one thing but it's important, to punish terribly the one who has done me wrong," and this attitude was prevalent enough in Athens during Plato's time that one of the speakers in *The Republic* interprets "giving every man his due" as owing good to friends and evil to enemies.

A Greek was not supposed to go to law against family members and friends, if he could avoid it, but was obliged to seek revenge from enemies. In Athens homicide remained a family affair as it was for ancient Jews, and it was up to a victim's family members to prosecute his murderer. (It was, however, legal for an Athenian to kill a thief in the night or his wife's lover, if he caught them in adultery.)

Justice, in most parts of the ancient world, depended on the efforts of a man's friends. The old conservative Theognis prays for powerful friends to avenge him, "Thus would I seem to be a god among men." In his book *Greek Popular Morality*, K.J. Dover sums up the moral perspective of the average Athenian of Plato's time:

> It may be said in broad terms . . . that an Athenian felt his first duty was to his parents . . . his second to his kinsmen, and his third to his friends and benefactors; after that, in descending order, to his fellow-citizens, to citizens of other Greek states, to *barbaroi*, and to slaves.

Even so systematic a philosopher as Aristotle makes all the routine distinctions and regarded at least some foreign races as fit for slavery. Universalism was introduced by an Oriental immigrant named Zeno, who founded the philosophical school later known as Stoicism. Inspired, so it is said, by Alexander's dream of universal empire, Zeno preached a doctrine that "men should not live divided into different states and peoples, each under its own law, but in a world state, of which all men are to be citizens. . ."

The early Stoics advanced such novel doctrines as the brotherhood of men, the equality of slaves, and cosmopolitanism, e.g., world citizenship. "Never say," says the ex-slave Epictetus, "when you answer the question what country do you belong to, that you are an Athenian or a Corinthian, but that you are a citizen of the world." In their utopian moments, the Stoics advocated a community of property and wives, but even the founders of the sect insisted upon the fulfillment of primary obligations to family and country, and in Roman hands, stoicism became an unofficial doctrine of the empire—which claimed, after all, to be the world. The stoic emperor Marcus Antoninus was more ambivalent. Dividing his nature into a social and a rational being, he acknowledged that insofar as he was Antoninus, his country was Rome, but as a man, his country was the world.

The Stoics' insistence on the brotherhood of man has much in common with St. Paul's declaration that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." But it is easy to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

overstate the Christian position on this point. The first Christians were practicing Jews living under a law that emphasized God's exclusive contract with his chosen people and the inferiority of all other nations. Even the Torah, in forbidding usury, had exempted loans made to foreigners, and among the worst punishments proclaimed against disobedient Israel was that the alien would rise above the Jew. The Samaritans, who deviated no more from the standard Judaisms than one sect of Protestant does from another, were regarded with contempt.

How far are Christians obliged to go in doing their duty? The Apostles, time after time, enjoin loyalty and obedience from wives to husbands, children to parents, slaves to masters, subjects to empire. John the Baptist was content with telling the Jews to share their food and clothing with the destitute, the tax collectors not to collect more than was due, and the soldiers not to extort money. Similarly Jesus (Matthew 19:16-26) told the rich young man that to gain eternal life he had only to honor his father and mother and obey the commandments. It was only when pressed that the master added, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." The rich, Jesus concluded—and among the rich he might have included over half the population of the United States—have as much chance of entering the Kingdom of Heaven as a camel going through the eye of a needle. The heroic task of giving one's goods away to the poor was apparently too much even for the disciples, who wondered, "Who then can be saved?" The obvious answer is, in human terms, no one, because "with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

Even the Son of God distinguished between the ordinary goodness of day-to-day moral life and the supererogatory works that characterized a saint. Throughout most of the first two Christian millennia, theologians and philosophers continued to make these distinctions, and Christian princes, with the blessings of their church, carried out crusades against pagans and heretics and waged wars against even Christian enemies. Only in recent centuries has Christianity been identified as the philosophy of timidity and nonjudgmental benevolence that Nietzsche derided.

Without going deeply into intellectual history, one can see that the universal benevolence of contemporary Christianity derives not from the Bible directly but from the attempts of Enlightenment philosophers to purify Scripture of its more "barbaric" elements and to universalize its teachings. To cite only one example, the deist Thomas Jefferson prepared his own edition of the Bible, which was expurgated of all Jewish particularities and theological interpretations. As he explained in a letter to John Adams (12 October 1813), Jesus' purpose had been the reformation of this "wretched depravity" of peculiar duties, and it was Jefferson's intention "in extracting the pure principles which he taught" to "strip off the artificial vestments in which they have been muffled by priests, who have travestied them into various forms." In one way or another, the moral doctrines of Voltaire, Kant, and the New England Transcendentalists all derive directly or indirectly from the sort of bowdlerization that Jefferson undertook. It was during the same period—the 18th century—that Stoic conceptions of universal brotherhood, international law, and world government reemerged.

The doctrines that inspire Christian disobedience are not derived from Christianity; they spring from the same polluted source that has also given the world the pernicious doctrine of universal rights that resulted in *Roe* v. *Wade*. In murdering a stranger, Michael Griffin was only carrying the logic of disobedience to its logical and diabolical conclusion.

If Christians wish to take the law into their own hands, then it is not Mr. Griffin they should be imitating but the California woman who walked into a courtroom and killed the homosexual who had molested her son. According to press reports, the local response has been strongly in favor of a mother who, despairing of the American system of organized injustice, asserted the right to defend and avenge her children. Far from being an act of disobedience or a protest against child abuse, this killing was the fulfillment of a primary obligation and an expression of natural justice. Instead of interfering in other people's lives, she attended to her own, and taking care of your own obligations leaves little time to shoulder the burdens of strangers. "If you'd mind your own business," Hank Williams once suggested, "you won't be minding mine."

Emerson

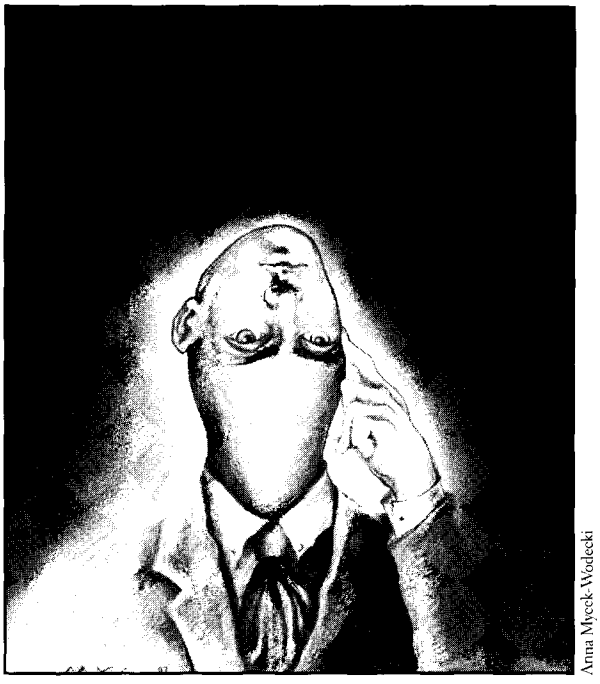
by Jorge Luis Borges
Translated by Robert Mezey

That tall North American gentleman
Closes his volume of Montaigne at leisure
And steps outside to taste no less a pleasure,
The richness of the fading afternoon.
Toward the deep departure of the west,
Toward the quarter that the sunset gilds,
He strides along through Concord's open fields
As through the mind of the one who's writing this.
He thinks: I read the essential books with care
And made a few to stand the test of time.
Some god vouchsafed that knowledge should be mine
Up to the limit that is set us here.
My name is recognized in every house.
I haven't lived. I wish I were someone else.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How Do You Know?

by George Watson



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

How much is actually *known* and not just supposed or imagined? A lot more, surely, than it is fashionable to think, at least in the world that moral and literary theorists seem to inhabit. So much more, that it is easy to forget how much by which we interpret the world and its texts is nothing less than certain.

To take a simple instance, there is a notice outside my college that reads "Bill Posters Will Be Prosecuted." Some sort of a joke, no doubt, could be made here: Bill Posters *might* be somebody's name, and the authors of the notice might just be making a prediction about him. But I doubt it. In fact, that is to understate the matter. I am utterly certain the notice does not mean that, even though I neither know nor care who wrote it; to raise the matter at all is to do no more than confirm a total certainty about what it evidently means. You understand, at first sight and without reflection, that it forbids people to stick things on the wall.

What is more, it is seen to mean that regardless of race, gender, or class, which is a thought that should give pause to ardent multiculturalists, gender-crusaders, and critics of Eurocentricity. If all uses of language were conditioned by race or gender or class, as is sometimes asserted, then this would be, too; but that hardly seems likely. In fact it is about as likely as a remark made in the 1930's by a Nazi apologist called Jakob Hommes, whose name, though now forgotten, ought to be celebrated among multiculturalists, because when urged to accept that arithmetic, at least, was free of race, he memorably replied that even twice-two-make-four is "somehow differently tinged" in the mind of a Negro. There speaks a man faithful to his principles. Hermann Goering, a more famous Nazi, similarly remarked in the spring of 1933, shortly after Hitler's seizure of power: "I am subjective—I submit myself to my people," meaning to Germans of pure stock; he added that he thanked God for having created him without a sense of objectivity. When people complain about linear logic and the like, it is sometimes easy to forget that we have passed this way before. The Nazis were against it long before the New Left or Deconstructionists were heard of. Dogmatic irrationality is not new.

Indeterminacy, then, or the theoretical notion that no text has one correct interpretation, has a longer, and a much shadier, history than is widely supposed, and brutal dictators have believed in it and advocated it. But to return to posting bills. It would not occur to me or, I imagine, to anyone else on reading that college notice to ask *how* one knows what it means—still less to worry that making any sense of its one correct interpretation, which is absolute and unhesitating, depends on being able to answer any such question. The familiar seminar challenge "How do you know?"—unanswerable as it often is—hardly seems to apply. One might indeed be

---

George Watson, who is a Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, is the author of Politics & Literature in Modern Britain *(1977),* Writing a Thesis *(1986),* The Certainty of Literature *(1989), and* British Literature Since 1945 *(1991).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stumped for an answer; but answer or no answer, there can be no doubt that the usual interpretation is the right one. So in interpreting texts far more is known, and certainly known, than is commonly noticed; one can be certain, and rightly certain, without justification, without explaining where the knowledge came from or how it is grounded.

That seems to be a hard point, nowadays, to accept in schools and colleges. Suppose you were to move from outside the college, where no posters are allowed, to the inside, where they sometimes are; suppose, too, that Bill Posters is a real person there, and that he teaches in a department of humanities. He will probably be scandalized to hear that there are cases where there is only one correct interpretation of a text and that one can be certain what it is without being able to say why. He may even glory in the dogma of critical indeterminacy. In April 1991, for example, Jacques Derrida ended a lecture at the University of Chicago, after two and three-quarter hours, with a soaring peroration in which he urged his audience, to their evident joy, to "draw all possible deductions from all possible hypotheses." One enthusiastic member of his audience, Richard Stern (*London Review of Books*, August 15, 1991), modestly called his all-but-three-hour ordeal a Daedalian act—with the disciple Icarus, whom we may presume here to signify Richard Stern, "soaring towards self-exaltation on wings which melted because of his stupidity" while his master elaborately, hour upon hour, took the starch out of "received texts, elevated positions, fixed hierarchies of value."

So things are happening in Chicago, which has long been known as the Windy City, much as they did in Paris 20 and more years ago. Much the same things, to tell the truth, but then universities exist (among other reasons) to preserve and to mummify. Bill Posters lives. He may even think it rash to be certain that a college notice is only about sticking things on walls. There are people who like this sort of Icarus-trip, on wings of wax that melt in the heat of the Paris or Chicago sun, and who like it for two and three-quarter hours at a time. In fact, Stern's report of Derrida's Chicago lecture speaks of rapt attention and prolonged applause: "The Deconstructor had built only too well; only that ever-surprising Surprise which deconstructs us all would silence the applause." That sounds like the birth—or is it the middle age?—of a religion, and one fully equipped with a Messiah, a scripture, and a cult. It is the language of mystical ecstasy.

Denying what you know is a faith with acolytes in some unexpected places, and prophets of the indeterminate can easily be embarrassed by their allies. The Nazis are among them. "There is no such thing as truth, either in the moral or in the scientific sense," Adolf Hitler told Hermann Rauschning in 1934, as the latter reported in *Hitler Speaks* (1939):

> The idea of a free and unfettered science—unfettered by hypotheses—could only occur in the age of Liberalism. It is absurd. Science is a social phenomenon, and like every other social phenomenon it is limited by the benefit, or injury, it confers on the community. The slogan of objective science has been coined by the professorate simply in order to escape from a very necessary supervision by the power of the state.

So Adolf Hitler, in his fashion, was an early multiculturalist; and though defeated, his dogma lives on. Even scientists, after a good dinner, can occasionally be heard to say they would believe nothing without proof, though they look puzzled when asked how they would prove that. But then to put that question at all has at least one good effect: it helps to deconstruct Deconstruction. In any case, the skeptical scientist can be entirely contented, in practice, with his unnoticed contradiction. He simply forgets all about it in the laboratory, where he rightly believes in all sorts of things he could not prove. In the lab it would not occur to him, for example, to doubt that what looks red is red; but how in the world would he prove it?

Skepticism in the deconstructive style, whether in Paris or in Chicago, unlike Hitler's or Goering's, is a game. Like the flight of Icarus, it belongs to fantasy. It is for dinner-table conversation, for papers read at international conferences, for critical journals. It has nothing to do with what the reader does when he reads. It is a game, above all, for those who are afraid that, without it, they might have nothing interesting to say—a substitute, sometimes two and three-quarter hours long, for having nothing to say. As a witty German philosopher recently remarked, "theory is what is done when there is nothing more to be done" (Odo Marquard, *Abschied von Prinzipiellen*, 1981). Nature abhors a vacuum, and silences have to be filled.

The skeptic in the humanities, however, is perhaps less likely than the scientist to be robustly inconsistent about such things. Bill Posters can be a worried man. There is no argument, George Orwell once said, by which you can defend a poem, and the skeptic-critic is inclined to throw up his hands at that, imagining it to be a damaging, even an unanswerable charge against everything beyond the severely factual that literary departments are supposed to be about. "Emily Brontë isn't better than Jackie Collins," a teacher of literature told an education conference recently, "just different." It can be hard to make Bill Posters forget his dud theory and simply get on with it. He is a despairing being. He believes that real and lasting damage has been done to literary culture, that radical skepticism of that sort cannot be answered, that it is time to give up.

This is because he has not noticed that his skeptical view of critical values is not fresh and innovative at all, as Derrida's audiences imagine, but old-fashioned in a classic 19th-century positivistic way; a touch of modern philosophy could help. Knowledge is not the same as account-giving, for a start, and the fact that a question cannot be answered is not in itself a reason to doubt that the answer is known. It does not follow from the fact that we cannot say why Emily Brontë wrote a better novel than Jackie Collins that we do not know *Wuthering Heights* to be better. Knowing how familiar foods and drinks taste abundantly illustrates that. Nobody, after all, can define the difference in taste between tea and coffee. Nobody, I imagine, supposes that it follows that he does not know the difference.

Knowledge, again, does not depend on justification—"How do you know?"—and silent, shared assumptions are not something to be ashamed of, as the instant lucidity of a notice prohibiting bill-posting illustrates, but rather natural and innocent instances of how language commonly works. A Cambridge philosopher, Elizabeth Anscombe, once raised her papers high over her head, in a dramatic gesture, and said to her audience: "If I ask 'How many is this?' you would have to ask a question or make an assumption"—an assumption, that is, about whether she meant lectures, or sheets, or words. To answer a question, to understand anything—whether a notice, a re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mark in conversation, or a novel—is to make all sorts of beyond-the-dictionary assumptions and to make them with unspoken certainty. Those who put up notices against bill posting know perfectly well they will be understood, though not necessarily obeyed. They do not need to explain what they do or do not mean.

We live in an age when the humanities are skeptic-credulous. Everyone knows that experts disagree about the best solution to inflation, the distances between heavenly bodies, and the present population of China, and that those disagreements represent no sufficient reason to doubt that economics, astronomy, and demography are objective inquiries. So why do we have so much moral and critical skepticism?

The academic demand for justification goes on nonetheless, in spite of the self-evident case against it; it may not be pure coincidence that Justification is a term in theology, usually concerning faith and works. The skeptic who gives up religion, like the sad clergyman in Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall* who starts worrying about the foundations of his faith, may easily fail to find them in literary studies too. Waugh's unfortunate clergyman, in the first and most farcical of his novels, loses his religion because he cannot see why God created the world at all, which is an extreme instance of what Wittgenstein used to call "starting too far back"; there may be a lot of spilt religion, or spilt atheism, in the desperate foundation-seeking that agonizes the humanities in the present age.

"How do you know Emily Brontë is better than Jackie Collins?" The challenge is of course meant to be unanswerable. I was once attacked in a lively seminar at a Scottish university, and in a building aptly named after the famous 18th-century skeptic David Hume, for suggesting that one can have knowledge—even certain knowledge—without being able to justify it, whether by proof, verbal definition, or expert agreement, and the storm the suggestion aroused was almost equal to the theological debates about justification by faith or works that shook Scotland four centuries ago. Plainly there is a big demand for justification in departments of literature and, in a secular age, a fretful sense that if divine authority can no longer be appealed to then another authority must quickly be found; that without such an authority—a new theoretical basis—no certitude can be had. Hence the chaotic, anything-goes Derridean world, once applauded in Paris and now shifted to Chicago and points west, of accepting defeat and drawing all possible deductions from all possible hypotheses.

The modern skeptic is commonly a disappointed foundationist. He has noticed that there are no stated and agreed foundations to critical values, but he still believes, in his old-fashioned way, that there should be: hence the Derridean formula of endlessly drawing all possible interpretations. But even that is problematical. For if *possible* interpretations are to be admitted, and only such, then impossible interpretations are presumably excluded. But what, in that case, are the criteria for judging whether an interpretation is possible or impossible? In a recent Cornell collection, Arden Reed's *Romanticism and Language* (1984), for example, it is suggested without irony that the crucial and hitherto unnoticed point about the boat-stealing scene in Wordsworth's *Prelude* is the near-homophony of pinnace—"elfin pinnace"—and penis:

> Once this homophony is recognized, the logic . . . is clear. . . . The associations of "heaving through the water like a swan" alleged by psychoanalysis—that penetrating the water is the penetration of a female element, that the swan represents a particularly male or phallic symbol . . .

After all, as the critic Timothy Bahti points out in a mood of mounting self-excitement, the poem reads "*lustily* I dipped my oars"; so one probable hypothesis of this boyish escapade is lust. If that is a possible interpretation, however, one begins to wonder what an impossible interpretation would look like.

An Irishman, when asked the way, once replied, "I wouldn't start from here at all." Nobody who wanted to read would start from here. He would behave, rather, like the scientist who knows perfectly well that what looks red is red. He would get on with it. In the topsy-turvy world of critical thought, however, that view is dismissed as pretending that the problems do not exist. But surely just the reverse is true. The near-homophony of "pinnace" and "penis" in Wordsworth's poem isn't a problem at all, and anybody who wastes time on that must be secretly convinced that there are no real Wordsworthian problems worth tackling. It is the critical theorist who is pretending problems do not exist, not the critical historian. The theorist in that style presumably imagines there is nothing serious left for the critical mind to do.

It would be interesting to ask why arguments that practicing scientists know to be a waste of time—like "How do we know that what looks red is red?"—appear enormously taxing to many who work across the fence in the humanities. Disagreement of experts, for example, which is commonplace in the physical sciences, leads few involved in science to doubt that they are engaged in an objective inquiry. They know and take for granted that experts disagree about objective questions. In moral and literary controversy, by contrast, disagreement is seen as fatal to the case for objectivity. An argument that counts for nothing in the laboratory can mean everything, apparently, in the library. We live in an age when the humanities are skeptic-credulous. Everyone knows that experts disagree about the best solution to inflation, the distances between heavenly bodies, and the present population of China, and that those disagreements represent no sufficient reason to doubt that economics, astronomy, and demography are objective inquiries. So why do we have so much moral and critical skepticism?

The catastrophe recently suffered by humanism is seen, by some, in sweeping and apocalyptic terms. In *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (1981), for example, Alasdair MacIntyre, a British philosopher teaching in the United States, sets out from a double hypothesis which, being largely unargued, one is plainly meant to accept as self-evident: that there are no moral certainties now, but that there once were. "The language of morality is in the same state of grave disorder" as the natural sciences would be, he argues, after a catastrophe in which lab-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

oratories had been burned down, scientists lynched, science teaching abolished, and anyone's view of the physical universe imagined to be as good as anyone else's. Today, he proclaims, there is total moral chaos. The reader is given no chance to demur at this powerful image of modern anarchy, and MacIntyre returns to it at the end of the book: with the two great rival systems of moral knowledge, Aristotelian and Christian, in terminal decline, as he believes, anyone can now be excused for being morally uncertain about anything. "There are no longer any clear criteria," and those who would justify virtue must begin to "look for another basis for moral belief." It is not just that there is no agreement. There is not even the prospect of agreement. "Our society cannot hope to achieve moral consensus." We are waiting not for Godot, as the book strikingly concludes, but for a new St. Benedict.

This is a powerful vision. It is also, as the author implies, a widely accepted one. Some years ago Hollywood made a film called *Network* based, though less thoughtfully, on the same premise, since it showed a clever television producer exploiting the moral despair of America by urging the inhabitants of one city after another, exhausted by a long diet of news flashes about serial murder, hijacks, hostages, and drug addiction, to hang out of their windows by the thousand and scream. Professor MacIntyre does not want his readers to open their windows and scream, and those who read a book called *After Virtue*, one may safely assume, are not much given to mass hysteria. Nor can any academic philosopher wish that they were. But his vision of the world is not much different from *Network*'s. Moral anarchy, both believe, is endemic to the world we inhabit; certainly nobody knows the difference between right and wrong any more, as they did in the days of Jane Austen or the medieval Church; and short of another spiritual revival as intense as Benedictine monasticism, though "doubtless very different," the world is forever doomed to ethical incertitude and unknowing despair.

There are several assumptions readily made here that need to be drawn out and examined. The first is that the modern world is an exceptionally wicked place. That is not a view unique to the present age; doubtless St. Benedict, patriarch of Western monasticism, felt something similar when he withdrew from the licentious life of Rome around 500 A.D. to a cave in Subiaco to write his Rule. The spirit of Subiaco has a certain recurrence in Western thought. Some 60 years ago P.G. Wodehouse wrote a song for *Anything Goes*—"The world's gone mad today / And good's bad today, / And black's white today / And day's night today"—which is a sort of musical anticipation of *After Virtue*. I also recall a lapel button at the University of California in Berkeley, in the late 1960's, that read "God is not dead: He just doesn't want to get involved," implying that matters were by then past the care of even divine omnipotence. That is going a point beyond Benedict and P.G. Wodehouse. One senses a throwing-up of hands here, a desperate or whimsical turning-away from rational problem-solving, and an indifference, in general, to the study of cases, considerations, and evidence.

In the face of that despairing mood—whether St. Benedict's, or Wodehouse's, or Berkeley's, or MacIntyre's—it is hard to be sure what answer would serve. If you believe that no interpretation is fixed and no argument uniquely persuasive, then you do not pay much serious attention to arguments when they are offered. If you are a moral pessimist in the God-is-dead Nietzschean style, playful or committed, then any suggestion that things have once been worse, or that they are getting better or may soon be getting better, sounds laughably like Pollyanna. Pessimism has intellectual prestige, after all; those who take that view or adopt that pose are unlikely to be talked out of it by merely rational considerations. I speak of posing here, since it was always plain that the hermits of Berkeley, at least, were not much like those of Subiaco. They went on living their agreeable lives, cheerfully enough, and are now, it is rumored, entered into a comfortable and prosperous middle age. They knew how seriously to take their own pessimism, unlike Benedict, as they applied for good jobs, bought homes, and made due and ample provision for retirement.

But in any case, it is of little use to talk of such things. Tell the Benedicts of today that the standard of living of the human race is probably higher than ever before in history, and they will charge you with indifference to famine in Africa or draw attention to the moral dangers of materialism—or, with a fine disregard for consistency, both. Tell them there has been no major war, in the style of 1914 or 1939, for nearly half a century, and they will accuse you of callous unconcern about Vietnam or the Gulf. Tell them that there are more students in higher education than ever before, and they will speak of the deficiencies of the inner-city schools. Hostage-taking, after all, did not begin in the 20th century; nor, as anyone who has studied the opium wars in China will know, did drug abuse. The screamers of *Network* were probably well-housed and well-fed. The film was a satire on television, and it is mass communication, surely, not the world itself, that persuades people by the thousand that they are living in a uniquely wicked age. They might not think so if they could watch television coverage of the Thirty Years War or of the fall of ancient cities where, by common practice, the adult males were slaughtered, the women and children enslaved, and the city razed to the ground.

The second assumption is that the modern world, unlike many ages before it, lacks moral agreement. That is hard to fathom. The media often report child murders, and yet no one ever seems to speak up for the murderers. If there were no moral consensus, one would expect someone to take the part of those who kill children. But nobody ever does, and the only issues are whether policing should be more thorough and penalties strengthened. Even pro-Nazis do not exactly defend Auschwitz: they deny that it happened and hint at Zionist propaganda, which surely implies that they too are unready to endorse, at least in public, what happened there. There is a vast consensus in economic and environmental matters—that the Western world is using too much fuel, for example, and that inflation is a bad thing—even if there is less agreement about what to do about them. Ninety percent of the people, as Winston Churchill used to say, are agreed about ninety percent of the things that need to be done. Western near-unanimity in rejecting the violent Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in August 1990 was impressive; so, in August 1991, was the heartfelt popular welcome, east and west, for the failure of the Moscow coup. The notion that there is no agreement on moral issues is manifestly absurd. Why, then, is it so confidently made?

One answer concerns the recurrent myth of a consensual Golden Age. Among modern centuries that age commonly is, and has to be, the 18th century, since there were religious wars in the 16th and 17th, as everybody knows, and the 19th spawned some highly anti-consensual thinkers like Emerson, Marx, and Nietzsche. The grand instance here is usually sup-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

posed to be the moral order of Samuel Johnson, with the novels of Jane Austen, which echo that world, as a late fictional pendant. So let us look at that alleged instance of moral consensus.

Boswell reports that Johnson was once taken by a friend to hear a sermon at the Temple in London, where the preacher "ranted about liberty." As they left the church, Johnson bitterly remarked that "our liberty was in no sort of danger: he would have done much better to pray against our licentiousness." That is a loyal member of the Church of England in 1770 disagreeing with the pulpit pronouncements of an Anglican clergyman; and the point at issue, which sounds rather like an anti-Whig point, is devastatingly fundamental. Some 18th-century Englishmen, notably Whigs, wanted more liberty; some, notably Tories, wanted less. The American Revolution of 1776 similarly divided British public opinion—and American too, as the Loyalists illustrate; so did the French Revolution 13 years later. Again, there was an embittered debate about the morality of slavery in the late 18th century and after, on both sides of the Atlantic. Where is the moral consensus there? The Golden Age of moral agreement does not exist, I suggest, except in the minds of moralists who wish that it did.

The third assumption is that a moral consensus could only be explicit, like St. Benedict's Rule. That is an instance of a wider fallacy: that knowledge is the same as account-giving. Moral rules like the Ten Commandments claim to give precise accounts of a moral system. When MacIntyre complains "there are no longer any clear criteria" in moral matters, he implies, in all probability, that one could only have a moral consensus if there were such criteria—rules which, like St. Benedict's, were stated and agreed, much like a monk's. He is mistaken on both counts. Nobody needs stated criteria in order to make sound judgments, whether in the arts, in morality, or elsewhere; agreement has nothing to do with it. There was widespread agreement before the 18th century, after all, that slavery was acceptable, which suggests that in moral matters, as in the natural sciences, it is possible to be agreed and wrong. The view that the sun goes around the Earth, after all, was once agreed to.

Odd for an academic, of all people, whether philosophical or not, to argue that stated criteria are needed in making judgments. Daily experience suggests otherwise. To mark a student paper is to make a judgment; if all judgments require such criteria, then that would. So what are they? I do not suppose any college department on earth, philosophical or other, would waste two minutes together debating such an issue. They would know perfectly well that any answer to that question could only be trite if it were true: "A good paper is one that is well-written and says true things in the right order." But answering in that fashion, as anyone can see, is not answering at all: it is merely restating the question in another form. What does well-written mean here, it will reasonably be asked, or true, or in the right order? It is notable that no one in practice judges a paper, or a book, by appealing to agreed criteria. In fact, good books can be distinguished from bad, and are—by children, for example—before the word "criterion" is understood at all.

A moral consensus would be much like that. It would not be like agreeing about the Ten Commandments or the Rule of St. Benedict, and those who condemn child-murder know that they do not need to turn to a rule-book before they condemn it. You know child-murder is wrong before learning any rules at all, often enough; and you know that the rule "Thou shalt do no murder" is right, on hearing it, because you already know it to be so. So if there are no clear criteria for moral judgment, as Professor MacIntyre complains, there may still be plenty of moral certitudes, and the world may still be a long, long way from moral anarchy or the law of the jungle.

A good deal of moral despair, I suspect, arises because, though the question "How do you know?" is often regarded seriously, it is not usually regarded literally. If someone asks "How do you know that murder (or slavery) is wrong?" he is not usually asking *how* you know it but *whether* you know it; he implies that only if you can produce grounds, at once stated and agreed, can the matter be judged to be beyond all doubt. The question is not a question, in fact, but a challenge, and to answer it literally would be to misunderstand it. If asked how you know that two plus two equal four, for example, you might reply, "Because I was taught it at school and have since seen it work admirably in practice"; but that is not what the questioner wants to hear. Knowing the difference between right and wrong might be even harder to answer. One did not learn morality, on the whole, as a set of propositions, as the two-times table is a set of propositions. On being told "It is wrong to murder somebody" the remark did not exactly represent the beginning of knowledge; it summarized a truth you already in some sense knew.

So there are truths one knows already and with certitude, and before language itself. In estimating that underrated truth it can be instructive to watch a prelinguistic child. An infant a few weeks old, on seeing an outstretched finger, will hesitate to clasp it, and when it does so it looks surprised, as if it had learnt something—something about the relation between how things look and how they feel. Even that is something one once had to learn; seeing that a person is a person is a further step: that hands, eyes, nose, and ears add up to an individual being. All this was once less than obvious, though it all seems obvious now—much as it is now obvious that murder and slavery are wrong. No wonder the moral consensus is so easily denied. It is denied not because it is not there, but because most of it has been there for so long that it is easily forgotten. Imagine asking Professor MacIntyre to explain how he learned English, for example, or how he knows the name of an old acquaintance called Smith. Everybody knows the man is called Smith, or at least all his friends do, and that sounds like a factual consensus—though not, it will be said, a very interesting one. But it only seems obvious. Once upon a time you did not know it at all, and it had to be learned.

Wittgenstein once remarked to his American friend Norman Malcolm that a philosophical confusion is rather like a man who does not know how to get out of a room. Malcolm was eventually to tell the story in his *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* (1958): "He tries the window but it is too high. He tries the chimney but it is too narrow. And if he would only turn around, he would see that the door is open all the time."

The door that leads out of moral and critical skepticism, too, has been open all the time. Nobody needs grounds for knowledge—least of all stated and agreed grounds—in order to know and to be certain that he knows. It does not matter how we know. As the philosopher said, turn around—the door is open.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pain Without Purpose

The Modern Dilemma

by Patrick Reilly

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

"We must remain absolutely silent on what we cannot talk about." Wittgenstein's interdict would surely apply to the mystery of human suffering; at certain intensities, pain becomes literally as well as idiomatically unspeakable. Even to allude to the educative value of pain is to risk an inhuman glibness, a cold-blooded reduction of the specificity of suffering to chill, abstract formulae. We must begin by confessing the ultimate intractability of the problem. Against pain and death we fight a losing battle; and the mystery, always insoluble, has, if anything, become more agonizingly problematic in our own time. Caring for the chronically and terminally ill has always been intensely difficult; in the modern world, technological advances notwithstanding, it has become immeasurably more so.

A world without anesthetics would be a hell; deprived of analgesics even so routine an event as a visit to the dentist would be something to be dreaded and shunned. To avoid or to minimize pain is an instinctive natural reflex; deliberate search for suffering is a perversion to which we give the name masochism. Yet it is equally true that a world without pain would be calamitous. Pain is essential to survival—without it we would perish. It is an early warning system, a defense mechanism, vital in preventive medicine against incipient and impending evil. Without pain teeth would rot insensibly in our gums, limbs quietly crumble to ash in flames or be mangled beyond repair in machinery, cancers placidly proliferate in our bodies. Once bitten, twice shy. The adage crystallizes the argument that pain educates, teaches us to avoid certain courses of action harmful or destructive to us. There are erstwhile professional footballers hirpling around as a direct consequence of repeated painkilling injections that enabled them to play when nature forbade—if they are crippled today it is because they were prevented from feeling pain. When nature communicates through pain we should listen; drugging her into silence may be a short-term gain, but it is a long-term folly.

But even here our consent is grudging; reason may compel us to acknowledge the value of pain, but the flesh instinctively recoils. A Lawrence of Arabia deliberately placing his fingers in a candle flame, training his body to endure pain, strikes us as abnormal, even perverse. Yet we know many perfectly normal people who seek pain as the route to excellence. Marathon runners tell of a pain barrier that must be gone through, a wall of pain toward which they knowingly run. People who could be sitting comfortably at home are on the road, in raging heat or freezing cold, hearts pounding, lungs exploding, limbs aching—suffering a pain they have willed because without pain there is no overcoming; pain is the ultimate indispensable proof and attestation of courage and skill. For the muscles to grow they must first be fatigued. There is no progress without pain, no achievement, mental or physical, without self-sacrifice, and throughout history people have been willing, even eager, to suffer, sometimes excruciatingly, for the sake of some cause, the love of some principle, some end or good prized above their personal comfort.

Such pain has meaning and purpose. When pain is meaningful, it cannot only be borne, it can be embraced. To comprehend pain is to tame it. If we know why we suffer, if, above all, we know the purpose of our pain, the higher good to which it ministers, we have already mastered it. Every day women

Patrick Reilly is a professor of English literature at the University of Glasgow.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

give birth in pain and think it worthwhile; willingly, they endure a long period of inconvenience, discomfort, pain—perhaps severe, often dangerous—in order to bring life into the world. If it were not so, human life would have vanished from the planet once the nexus between procreation and pain was established. Death itself can be chosen when there seems good reason for it; if it were not so, there would be no heroes, no martyrs, no Leonidas at Thermopylae or Crockett at the Alamo. It is undeniably terrible to be condemned to death, but it is not necessarily unendurable. What is unbearable is to be condemned to death for nothing, to be a martyr to senselessness. Here is the inanity explored so powerfully by Kafka in *The Trial*. At the close of that dark text the protagonist dies supplying his own intolerable epitaph: "Like a dog!" But precisely here is the heart of the mystery, for a human being cannot die like a dog, cannot, at least, consent to a dog's death without protesting the imbecilic injustice of such an end.

There is no progress without pain, no achievement, mental or physical, without self-sacrifice, and throughout history people have been willing, even eager, to suffer, sometimes excruciatingly, for the sake of some cause, the love of some principle, some end or good prized above their personal comfort.

What is peculiar about human beings is not their suffering—all animals suffer—but their questioning of this suffering. The problem of suffering rises precisely from man's refusal to acquiesce in its inevitability; he alone among the animals demands an explanation. Wittgenstein notwithstanding, we cannot but insist upon knowing why we suffer and die—which is, of course, not at all the same as being able to name the disease that is killing us: to name is a necessary but not a sufficient cause of understanding. Anguish must be contained within a matrix of meaning if it is to be endured, mastered, and, greatest triumph of all, made purposive, fruitful. It is pain without purpose, neither educating nor correcting, leading nowhere but the grave, that is intolerable; such lunatic torment is an atrocity not to be borne, an obscenity not to be endured.

Today we are vulnerable, as no previous generation of healers and sufferers ever was, to the scandal of senseless suffering. The human demand for an explanation of pain meets today an embarrassed silence; pain is not *for* anything—the question that human beings cannot help but ask is now regarded as pointless and misplaced. This is especially true in the matter of chronic or terminal suffering, where the sole prospect is of ever-increasing agony ending in squalid death, "like a dog." We increasingly believe that pain is the worst of all evils and that incurable pain is totally bereft of any value, dehumanizing to all concerned—victim, relatives, and carer alike. Our sinister modern expression "the quality of life" reveals this mentality: the notion is of human life as a commodity, a product rolling off a conveyor belt and subject to a system of quality control; when the product is defective, its quality impaired below a certain minimum level of acceptability, we bring it to a compassionate close in the name of kindness, we discard it as an inferior item.

The ineffable evil of pain lies at the core of *1984*. Winston is struck on the elbow with a truncheon: "He had slumped to his knees, almost paralysed, clasping the stricken elbow with his other hand. Everything had exploded into yellow light. . . . One question at any rate was answered. Never, for any reason on earth, could you wish for an increase of pain. Of pain you could only wish one thing: that it should stop. Nothing in the world was so bad as physical pain. In the face of pain there are no heroes, no heroes, he thought over and over as he writhed on the floor, clutching uselessly at his disabled left arm."

The enormity of gratuitous anguish brings *King Lear* to a close. The good man, Edgar, still striving to keep the dying king alive, is rebuked by Kent, Lear's steadfast servant: "O let him pass. He hates him / That would upon the rack of this tough world / Stretch him out further." There could be no more potent argument for euthanasia. When the world becomes a torture chamber, with Lear cruelly elongated on the rack of his anguish, what sensitive, compassionate person would wish to keep him alive? Edgar means well, but his kindness is really cruelty. Lear will live on simply to undergo pointless, irremediable pain. "O let him pass." How often today is this prayer wrung from some anguished bystander at the protracted pain-bed of a terminally ill patient. End the obscenity, have done with the torment, victim's and onlooker's alike: to what possible end serves such pointless pain?

Winston and Kent summarize the contemporary conventional wisdom on pain: all pain is evil; purposeless pain is an abomination to be ended when it cannot be cured. That other ages have held totally different views strikes us, when we consider it at all, as irrelevant, as proof of their intellectual backwardness, their superstitious attitude toward life. Aeschylus in the *Agamemnon* insists that "man must suffer to be wise." Shakespeare in *King Lear* tells us that "nothing almost sees miracles / But misery," and the play confirms this. Not till Gloucester has been blinded does he see true, not till Lear has himself become a homeless wretch does he learn that other people suffer too: "Poor naked wretches . . . / O, I have ta'en / Too little care of this!" The storm-lashed heath is Lear's schoolroom, suffering is his education, and, far from being the worst of evils, pain is the means of his regeneration, the agent of his redemption. The loving father who dies of a heart attack at the play's end is a far better man than the selfish autocrat of the opening scenes, and pain has been his tutor, has been, paradoxically, "good" for him. It is an insight not wholly lost to modern literature; the eponymous hero of Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* discovers that truth comes from blows, that "suffering is about the only reliable burster of the spirit's sleep."

But such modes of thought as the educative or reformative value of suffering, such concepts as the spirit asleep in a comfortable body, run counter to the grain of the modern world. The old idea that suffering can purify (the idea that sustains the tragedy of the Greeks, Shakespeare, and Racine); that it may be a test of virtue or patience (Job is here the exemplary figure); that no suffering is pointless if it is the means of sanctification and rescue (the Suffering Servant Isaiah and Christ are the exalted embodiments of such teaching): none of this affects the modern consciousness. The latter part of Bacon's an-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tithesis—that prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament, adversity of the New—seems to us mere gibberish. In the ages of faith, Job was of key importance as the recourse-figure when trying to comfort the innocent sufferer, the blameless victim. By any human calculation, Job gets a raw deal. Yet, in his totally undeserved affliction, he steadfastly exhibits a saintly fortitude. He rejects his wife's advice to curse God as the author of his calamities—"though he slay me yet will I trust him"—and instead turns his suffering to creative account. At the happy end he is rewarded for his endurance—an image of the heroic overcoming of suffering.

Christ's invitation to take up his cross gave a dignity to pain, presenting it as an election rather than a curse. Into your hands I commit my spirit: his dying words taught the sufferer how to comport himself when his own Calvary came round. Gethsemane revealed the striking simplicity of the Christian attitude toward pain. If pain can be avoided, avoid it—let this chalice pass; there is to be no masochistic traffic with anguish. But if pain cannot be avoided—thy will, not mine—then it must not only be borne but made fruitful; one thinks of how Mary Craig's handicapped children led her into dynamic participation in the work of the Sue Ryder homes. "Even if my Father chastises me, I am ready for scourges, because my inheritance awaits me": St. Augustine's assurance arrests the modern reader. "I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to come which shall be revealed in us": St. Paul, who had suffered much, dismisses his pain as trifling when set against his final felicity. Present pain could even be desirable—woe to him, warns Augustine, who pays none of his debt in this life. The underlying idea is that there can be no complete evasion of suffering, that you have to suffer somewhere, if not in this world, then in the next; you can be spared now or later—much better to pay now. The gospel text repeatedly used to illustrate this was the parable of Dives and Lazarus—the rich man now damned in hell for his life of pleasure on earth; the beggar, one of the wretched of the earth, now at peace in Abraham's bosom.

The truth-content of such teaching is not the issue. Neither Marx nor Freud deny the consolatory power of religion; they simply dismiss it as untrue. But even allowing that it is illusion, compensation, wish-fulfillment, this still leaves the possible efficacy of such beliefs concerning pain intact, both for the victim trying to come to terms with his suffering and for the doctor trying to sustain a patient through the hell of his affliction. Marx talks revealingly of religion as "the opium of the people," but it is a mistake to read this as mere denunciation. Marx has no wish to deprive suffering humanity of its painkiller before the proper remedy—the socialist reconstruction of society—has been found: why operate on people without anesthetics? Religion may be a crutch, but we should heal the limb before we throw the crutch away. Freud is, admittedly, sterner, more stoical, acting what he preached; he reprimanded the doctor who, in defiance of his categorical command, administered a painkilling drug to him during an especially severe bout of pain while he was dying of cancer. But it is Freud who is untypical here, with his insistence upon consciousness even if it entails agony—he wanted to *feel* his dying. The great difference between Marx and Freud is that the former is a utopian optimist, the latter a stoic tragedian. For Freud, suffering cannot and should not be avoided if the price is the suppression of consciousness: we must learn to live without opiates. "The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness": Marx is, assuredly, not recommending, with Freud, a stoic acceptance of pain. In his optimistic scenario, we will reject illusion and eliminate pain simultaneously. Marx will have no truck with what American psychologists refer to as "no-end grief," by which they mean living with a heartbreaking set of circumstances that are unalterable, unending, and ever-demanding: chronic pain, terminal illness, psychological despair. Nowhere is Marx more transparently a great alternative religious leader, a heretic of the Judaic-Christian tradition, than in his dream of an end to suffering and the establishment of a kingdom of peace and justice—he differs only in the matter of its location.

The erosion of religious belief in our time, the increasing and apparently irresistible secularization of society have made it commensurately more difficult to recruit such religious teachings concerning pain in the treatment of the chronically or terminally ill. Ours is a post-Christian, post-religious age: the reassurances, promises, consolations of religion are less available, less potent today than in any previous historical period. Our expectations are totally different, our world view completely other. Technology has given us control over our environment in a way unknown to our predecessors. Our mastery of nature creates in us a pervasive expectation: the technological abolition of all suffering. For the first time in history people are being born who do not expect to suffer. From ancient Greece to the end of the 19th century, pain was regarded as an inevitable component of human life to be accepted, endured, embraced, because it could not be avoided. The flat truism that we are born to suffer, announced again and again in the art of the West, so inseparable from its religion, has now for the first time been challenged and rejected, decried as shameful, obscurantist nonsense.

Schopenhauer remarks that we do not really experience health but rather its absence. Possessing it, we take it for granted, like the air we breathe; health is like paradise—while it is ours we treat it with cavalier disdain, prizing it only when it is lost. The fact that we know health only through privation convinced Schopenhauer that suffering is our natural, our normal condition. Accepting the same data as Schopenhauer, we reach a diametrically opposite conclusion: that illness is unnatural and perverse. Accordingly, we resent pain as an impertinent intrusion, an affront and an outrage, something that ought never to have happened. Psychologically, we are akin to the man who, on his first day in the death-camp, complained to the guard that in his case a mistake had surely been made. In a multitude of the condemned he protests his individual condemnation; in a world of pain each person is scandalized at his own personal suffering. Even the suffering and death of relatives and friends fail somehow to convince us that they are simply our trailblazers.

In *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, Tolstoy shows a survivor rejecting the thought that Ivan is his Baptist, anticipating and preparing his way: "'Why, it might happen to me all of a sudden, at any moment,' he thought, and for an instant he was terrified. But immediately, he could not have explained how, there came to his support the old reflection that this thing had befallen Ivan Ilyich and not him, and that it ought not and could not happen to him, and that to think that it could meant that he was falling into a melancholy frame of mind." The Lenten reminder of the dust from which we came and to which we must revert can only seem morbid to such a mentality.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At the same time as we attempt to disguise doom as mere accident, the development of anesthetics, analgesics, and narcotics has helped us to dull the sensitivity in us that bears affliction. We demand not only that we shall not suffer, but that the sufferings of others—carried beyond a certain point—shall be removed from our gaze. Wordsworth in his poem *The Old Cumberland Beggar* speaks of the beggar's value to the community in providing an opportunity for the exercise of charity and compassion, but our definition of value is more strictly economic. Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is a terrifying parable of how compassion turns into indifference, as Gregor Samsa's family adjusts to his hideous transformation and gets on with its everyday life. But no one has more penetratingly charted the process by which pity can turn into revulsion than Herman Melville in his presentation of Bartleby, the pale young scrivener, "forlornest of mankind," who first moves his employer to compassion before becoming a "millstone," an "intolerable incubus," someone who must somehow be got rid of. "Up to a certain point the thought or sight of misery enlists our best affections; but, in certain special cases, beyond that point it does not. They err who assert that invariably this is owing to the inherent selfishness of the human heart. It rather proceeds from a certain hopelessness of remedying excessive and organic ill. To a sensitive being, pity is not seldom pain. And when at last it is perceived that such pity cannot lead to effectual succor, common sense bids the soul be rid of it. That I saw that morning persuaded that the scrivener was the victim of innate and incurable disorder." This discovery precipitates the lawyer's resolve to separate forever from his incurable clerk. True, he cannot bring himself to "commit his innocent pallor to the common jail," but he is pleased to let others do it for him. The "wasted" Bartleby is led off to die in prison; suffering is made invisible, taken where the sensitive lawyer need no longer see it.

In Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* this process is carried to its conclusion in the criminalization of illness, with pity replaced by condemnation. In Butler's imaginary land suffering has become a matter of culpability. "You were convicted of aggravated bronchitis last year," says a magistrate to a consumptive defendant, "and I find that though you are now only twenty-three years old, you have been imprisoned on no less than fourteen occasions for illnesses of a more or less hateful character." Even if illness is not the patient's fault, it is unquestionably a fault in him. The idea, prevalent in older cultures, that sickness may be linked to sanctity, that the sufferer may be the special child of God, demanding respect or even veneration, has no place in *Erewhon*. "That dislike and even disgust should be felt by the fortunate for the unfortunate . . . is not only natural, but desirable for any society, whether of man or brute." Beneath the satire Butler is as serious as Nietzsche undoubtedly was when he denounced Judaism, Christianity, and socialism as dysgenic forces, making for unhealth in their perniciously misplaced concern for the suffering, the weak, and the downtrodden.

The hints abroad today veer toward the Erewhonian rather than the religious view of suffering. The image of successful humanity increasingly held up by society is of healthy, confident, active people. Our sick are sequestered in hospitals, to be encountered only on "visits." We educate people for health and happiness; we have no equivalent disciplines for a training in pain; for the first time in human history the concept of the educative value of pain is at risk of being culturally lost. Contrasting sharply with the domain of successful humanity is the domain of suffering humanity, of sick, failed, inadequate people. There is that ominous expression about the quality of life—those who, in whatever way, fall short of this quality are to that extent judged to be less than human. Implicit here, reluctant though we may be to admit it, is a secret conviction that those who suffer pain are somehow diminished, that, at certain levels of intensity, suffering is incompatible with being human. Such sufferers, having lost their own value as human beings, cannot possibly have anything of value to offer to others.

Prior to the new developments in technology and aesthetics, the chief lesson of our culture concerning pain was how to bear it with patience and fortitude. The impotence born of technological ineptitude found its corresponding ethic in a view of pain as the normal, the expected human condition; to live is to suffer—those who dream otherwise inhabit Cloudcuckooland. Now all is changed: how much so can be illustrated by certain widespread reactions to the current epidemic of AIDS in the Western world. The platitudinous observation that certain lifestyles or modes of behavior tend to expose their exponents to a high risk of infection provokes fury in certain quarters, along with a demand that actions shall not have consequences, that new technologies, serums, drugs shall be instantly found to evade and frustrate the penalties of nature. We control nature: some such conviction is at the root of much modern thinking on the question of pain. Of course, we must search for antidotes and cures, but, until such time as these are discovered, it might be wise to amend, so far as we can, the practices that science has identified as helping to spread the disease. An older wisdom warned that as a man sows, so shall he reap. A modern faith in medical technology persuades us that we can act with impunity, with science always at hand to bail us out. All suffering is theoretically avoidable: we need not suffer. The result is that when suffering ineluctably comes, it strikes us like a betrayal, a brutal reneging on promises made and unreservedly trusted. Those who have been educated solely for health will be helpless before hardship. The dual vocations of healer and sufferer, medical advances notwithstanding, are harder than at any remembered period in our past; never has it been more difficult to endure pain or to comfort the victim.

LIBERAL ARTS

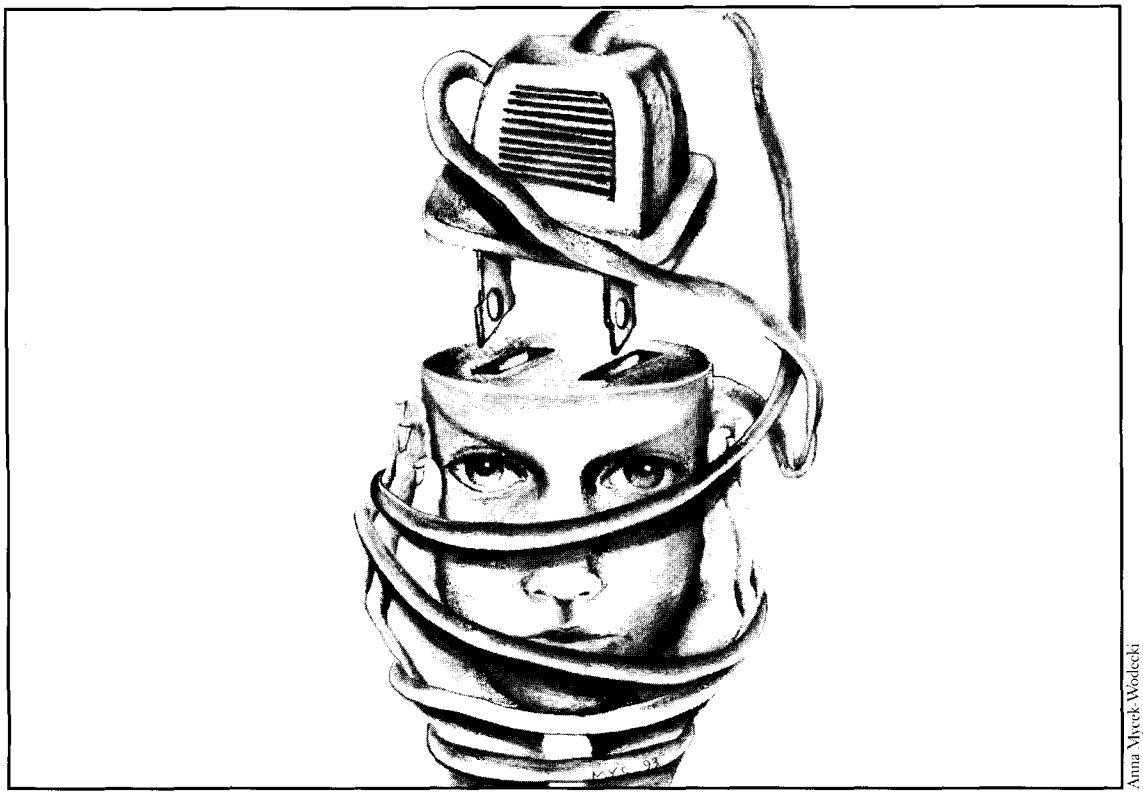
THAT OLD-TIME RELIGION

George Washington University's second annual Religion Week, held from March 25 to April 1, was a big flop, reports the GW *Hatchet*. Chris Kristen Holz, one of the organizers of the week's events, blamed the low turnout on "how mainstream the week's events have been." Part of the trouble may have been GW's conception of "mainstream." The week's events were cosponsored by the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Alliance and Wimmin's Issues Now. One of the events was a "theater interpretation" of the Garden of Eden entitled "Guarding the Garden: An Eco-Feminist Portrayal of Genesis."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Ideology of Technology

by Thomas Molnar



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

The technological age has been in gestation since the late Middle Ages, when the Sorbonne professors (Oresme, Buridan), the Catalan Ramón Lull, and the German Nicholas of Cusa directed their quest away from the Scholastic philosophy of *essences* toward a method that explores *relationships*. This quest was at the heart of modernity, and for centuries great thinkers subscribed to its objectives, trying to refine *method*. It followed that in the 17th century the mechanical sciences with their mathematical ideal conquered the foremost minds, lay and ecclesiastical alike. The former (Descartes, Hobbes) saw in method the key to an ideal society (utopia) based exclusively on reason and calculable appetites (social calculus); the latter (Malebranche, Mersenne) saw in the mechanical laws of the universe proof of God's reliability as a master-mechanic, a supreme watchmaker. (Cusanus, two centuries before, had made room for a "geometrical god," which was to inspire Copernicus and Galileo.) Only Pascal, Leibniz, and Bossuet pointed out the other, nonmechanical, dimensions of God and the universe.

These brief preliminaries help us to measure the social—and ideological—impact of technology. It is easy to assert that technology is an assemblage of neutral instruments that provides shortcuts to generally desired goals. If this were the case, if technologues did not aim at organizing a smoothly functioning society and developing the appropriate mentality to run it, technology would have no opponents. After all, we no longer subscribe to the ancient Greek ethos according to which the task of free men is to govern the polity and engage in philosophical contemplation—but *not* to undertake action in the areas of the *ars mechanica*, the *techné*. Nor did medieval man object to useful technical inventions for harnessing a horse's shoulders rather than neck, or to improved methods of deep-mining, of powering mills, etc.

If contemporary thinkers rebel against technology, the reason must be sought in the role that technology has assumed in the modern era: the replacement of social authority and moral principles by exclusively rational arrangements. Put otherwise, technology is suspect in the elimination of the mysterious, the spontaneous, the incalculable—and in the rise of the homogenized common denominator and what we called above the social calculus.

The latter has seductive aspects, and not everybody sees in it the work of "terrible simplifiers." As a tool of ad-hoc problem-solving or long-range planning—from oil exploration to space ships to medical cloning—technology does indeed appear an overall facilitator of human existence, indispensable and innocent. Some of technology's anxious critics—Arnold Gehlen, for example—are so fascinated as to provide a quasi-justification for it. Accordingly, the technological age is the culmination of the self-sustaining activity of the *Homo Faber* who, by degrees from food-gathering and hunting, has achieved total control of his surroundings. That technology may be final is not only Gehlen's alarmed conclusion; Helmut Schelsky was even more pessimistic, perceiving the use of technology in social and intellectual manipulation. Quite a few others have accepted similar anti-technological lines of argumentation, and their number is perhaps growing with the recent applica-

---

Thomas Molnar's latest book is The Church, Pilgrim of Centuries *(Eerdmans).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions of biotechnological solutions to what earlier would have been understood as purely human and moral situations. At any rate, we have left behind critics like Ortega and his mass-man or the more pertinent Bergson, who perceived in technological man the sclerosis of the *élan vital*, the ossification of the spirit's potentialities. The last word among technology's critics belongs to Jacques Ellul, for whom technology is like sin: the collective automaton's rebellion against God. Even Marxists—that is, later disciples such as Lukacs, the early Kolakowski, Adam Schaff—distanced themselves from the scientific and technological paradise, preferring to speak of a "Marxist humanism" in which the cruder aspects of the praxis would not entirely extinguish the light of a spiritual culture.

But it is not spirit alone that is at stake. In its essence, technology is a method of organizing aspects of life and then organizations, until a totality is reached in which organization is self-perpetuating. The *perpetuum mobile* is the ultimate dream behind every machine and every technologue. At this point error is eliminated, and with it the human being who errs. We note here the sharpening of the affinity between technology and ideology, both of which propose hermetically closed systems and super-systems that remove as superfluous an independent inner life. Society is no longer Plato's man writ large, history ceases to be an indefinite number of crossroads where freedom and imagination meet in unplanned combinations. The features of the machine are copied in society: uniformity in production, homogeneity, predictability. The last word of technology is *simultaneity*, since time, too, is mechanized: history moves according to planned portions of time; time for all men must become the same.

This is the final significance of technology: the precalculated simultaneity of human awareness. If this sounds like jargon, let us rather say that consciousness is reordered as a clock: all men are aware of the same thing at the same time. Why is this technologically or ideologically desirable? Because it guarantees *transparence*, that is the abolition of individuality and personhood. This is approximately what A. Gehlen had in mind when he wrote that "the future no longer holds any prospect of a resurgence of mythical consciousness, since the industrial culture now conquering the globe is rationalistic through and through." In the years when Gehlen wrote this, Marshall McLuhan had his intuitive phrase about the world as an "electronic village," in other words the rise of the collectivity to consciousness through technology. Simultaneity, transparence.

The final phase of technology calls forth the planetary participation of all mankind in receiving information and making decisions, so that each becomes transparent to all. Jürgen Habermas has built on this insight a whole social epistemology, technology's final refinement and philosophical crowning. The content of Habermas's "social rationalization" is the intercommunication of all members of planetary society. It would be naive to suppose that with such a step technology is still only a neutral instrument; in fact, it acquires an ideological dimension. The *chef de file* of the Frankfurt School discards any further philosophical speculation when he writes that truth is a (social) language game, offering us a practical grasp of the world, a substitute for reasoning with abstract concepts. "Truth" is then the linguistic perspective of social communication, the only valid espousal of reality, itself social. The *conditio sine qua non* is then technology, which permits immediate awareness and offers the monopoly of initiating and programming intercommunication to a social scientific elite.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that such an elite is by necessity the top echelon of a totalitarian party, a *nomenklatura*. Technology has its own set of postulates, independent of the regime in which it functions. Writing of the fusion of a regime-neutral technology with industrial megaproduction, Ingmar Granstedt observes that such a combination cannot be reversed or dismantled because our collective fascination with productive power has reached ideological dimensions—although we are aware of our increasing impotence as persons within the system. In other words, socialism versus capitalism is not here an issue; from the point of view of technology, they do not represent positive or negative signs.

The critics mentioned above seem to feed the ideological dimensions of technology when they conclude that technology is an end-situation, inscribed in mankind's fate as an apocalypse. But Granstedt himself speaks in *L'impasse industrielle* (1980) of the finitude of our mental capacity as it clashes with the superpower of modern and foreseeable industrial equipment. This is also the view of F. Hayek, K. Popper, and others. McLuhan's and Habermas's global intercommunication may not be possible for the same reasons that huge empires collapse. The increasingly interdependent structures (or structures of structures) are so refined at their points of junction that the probability of failure and dysfunction becomes overwhelming. This seems to be true of industry, but also of statecraft, indeed of civilizations. The law that governs the finality of technology may itself be subsumed to another, more general law: the law of degeneracy and exhaustion. ·c·

LIBERAL ARTS

COSTLY SENSITIVITY

When a woman in Santa Ana, California, admitted to a marriage counselor that she had never really been sexually attracted to her husband, it proved to be a costly admission. Arguing that his wife's hidden feelings constituted fraud, and that he would never have married her if he had known how she truly felt, her husband, Ronald Askew, sued his ex-wife and was awarded $242,000 in damages last April. According to the *L.A. Times*, Bonnie Askew claimed "the only reason I did not tell him was because I didn't want to hurt his male ego."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dipstick

by Charles Edward Eaton

He had wanted to be immersed in life:
Into the sea like a dipstick in blue,
Into the batter, a bloated raisin,
Into the cream a lascivious tongue—
The nude in the choker—would she prefer
To be buried up to her neck in pearls?
The wine sop longs and longs for the weir,
A finger, pulled from the pudding, fevers.
One wants to enter, enter, not withdraw:
Fruits, heaped on the sideboard, all pies
deep-dish.
The naked skin cannot resist the kiss.
Into the morass and into the murk
To rescue a legend of the limpid:
The sea diaphanous to our desire,
The aurora held up in the wine glass,
The woman conceived as mother of pearl—
Just this morning, this thick, heady brew,
This slew, this great puncturing of pictures,
A wanting to come up somewhere coated,
To center in the rising arabesque,
Shedding a shower of jonquils, hyacinths,
Drenched in the full, drawn-down, liquids of
spring—
It is not every day that one can feel
This way, the pump somehow idle of all thrill—
The tongue dripping a single drop of cream,
The sea in its great, wide, blue flatulence
Unstirred by gold swan dives into its side,
The choker a dog collar of desire.
Come ecstasy, come, whenever you can:
The lips will swell to yielding cabochon.
Deep, deep, the stick is stable in the oil.

Long Hours in the Sun

by Charles Edward Eaton

Do you remember, all those years ago, long hours in
the sun,
To the beach, and back again, always moving free of
shadow?—
Few words were even thought, and spoken—for
long hours—not one.

You did not think a single minute on how life
aborts—
The fruit was ripening, the sea was full, the trees
were shimmering:
You came out from the only shell you wore—
espadrilles and shorts.

The succubus was in your room, here the
sumptuous lay *sub verbo*—
I wonder if we do not all count upon these
underlying plots:
You want the shade, the well—I want the endless
summer and the glow.

But this we share—the inexpressible to live at
ease—the surd—
I lie, subaltern, unsuborned, disarmed, unprocessed
for a while,
And do not want to point at you or you the gun of
any word.

How is it then that things are still so fat and ful-
some for the knife?—
When you go home and see the faces, books, the
boudoir sotto voce,
The sentence lashes, rips for any lucid oil, a drop of
sublife.

Those lovely hours in the sun, the sentence slashed
and milked to drouth—
I think I parse a pattern in the powers of life: Sun
dogs bark
Subalterns home to open faces, books, closed lips,
prim mouth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Women and Biographers First!

by F.W. Brownlow

"One would suffer a great deal to be happy."
—Marly Wortley Montagu

Evelyn Waugh: The Later Years 1939-1966
by Martin Stannard
New York: W.W. Norton & Company; 512 pp., $25.95

◆

To be really successful a modern writer must reach and hold a huge audience, and there seems to be essentially two ways of doing it: the journeyman (or tradesmanlike) and the heroic-histrionic. Scott, Trollope, Agatha Christie, and P.G. Wodehouse represent the first way, which demands a lifetime of hard work and patient marketing, and leaves little time for the kind of experience of which exciting biographies are made. Byron, Dickens, and Hemingway represent the second, which requires strong nerves and a knack for self-promotion.

Evelyn Waugh's career places him firmly in the Byronic line, even though he thought of himself as a craftsman and revered P.G. Wodehouse as "the master." Nonetheless, he had almost nothing in common with Wodehouse, a modest, private, intensely shy man. Waugh was a very different type. He shared Byron's gift for dramatics and publicity, and he was similarly brave, pugnacious, and ambitious. Like Byron he hankered for success in action rather than in literature, a desire which took him traveling and soldiering. And as with Byron, he had a violent streak. The role of antagonist came naturally to him.

Although Evelyn Waugh had a sign on his gate reading "No admittance on business," he led much of his life in public, in a character largely of his own devising, on a series of platforms provided by newspapers, magazines, gossip columns, correspondence, and social intrigue. He

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

was even prepared to use radio and television, though always on terms of guarded hostility. The resulting performance was a distinguished one. It explains why people became so curious about him, and why his death on Easter Day, 1966, released a flood of anecdote and memoir that continues today.

Readers wanting to know about Evelyn Waugh are not short of material. In 1975 Christopher Sykes, who knew him well, published a biography. There are several books of reminiscence by people who knew him, and he appears frequently in the memoirs of his contemporaries. Selections from his diaries, correspondence, and journalism are available. Now there is a thousand-page academic biography, of which the present book is the second volume.

When Frances Donaldson, who had written a delightful memoir of Evelyn Waugh, came to write a life of P.G. Wodehouse, she had a hard time showing that Wodehouse had any life at all away from his typewriter. Martin Stannard faced the entirely different problem of making a coherent narrative out of an enormous mass of material, most of it emanating from the subject himself, much of it already known, and nearly all of it bearing upon Waugh's activities as a familiar, pungently characterized public figure. In the circumstances, it is understandable that Stannard should have decided to go looking for the unknown, private Evelyn Waugh.

To do this he drew upon much unpublished material, especially letters, and upon interviews with Waugh's surviving acquaintances. So much is already available, however, that a reader familiar with the subject will probably not learn a great deal about Waugh from Stannard's book, and in fact will often want to turn from the biography to the originals. The most interesting new material, enough of it to be significant, reveals a little of the Waugh known to his family and really close friends, a very funny man, capable of great kindness, constantly and heroically generous. And while he could be extremely difficult, it will occur to some of Stannard's readers that in his later years Waugh often found himself among people who deserved all the difficulty he could inflict.

Of course, the important thing about a book like this is its narrative interpretation of the author's life and work. Stannard's later Waugh is an increasingly withdrawn and embittered man at odds with himself and his times, disliked and dislikeable. Although enormously successful as a writer, he is haunted by feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and failure. Hence, despite the bluster of his public persona, he is deeply divided against himself. At the period of *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* this division drives him mad. Finally, issuing in the form of depression and incapacity, it kills him. His writings are a kind of allegorical or symbolic descant on this story, which some of Stannard's first reviewers described as harrowing and tragic.

It is certainly an interesting story, and a profoundly moral one, a stern warning to any writer who might be tempted to go against the grain of his age. It is also

F.W. Brownlow is a professor of English at Mt. Holyoke College.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an extremely unoriginal one. The name of the unfortunate hero may vary, but as a kind of modern version of the rake's progress this tale of a divided self and what became of it has been told about a number of very successful, very famous, very original artists. To name only three: John Wain told it at Lord Byron's expense, Edmund Wilson at Charles Dickens', and Ernest Newman at Franz Liszt's. If lives like these are in some sense failures, and if Evelyn Waugh's life was a harrowing tragedy, what have the rest of us to hope for?

Well. Like More's Utopians, we, and no doubt Martin Stannard, can always hope for good digestions, permanent employment, a well-funded pension, and a comfortable old age. Evelyn Waugh chose to live more adventurously, and Stannard's immense, informative, industriously assembled book is decidedly out of sympathy with its subject and his chosen way of life. By any ordinary, non-utopian standard Waugh was immensely successful, not only as a writer, but in shaping circumstances to his desires. A man of great vitality, he earned every inch of his place in the world, and a fine, capacious place it was, too. He suffered intermittently from melancholy; he despised socialism; and the Church disappointed him—none of which killed him. Evelyn Waugh died of the natural and untragic conditions known as weariness and old age, both of them premature in his case, but both brought on by the punishing life he chose to lead. And neither finished him off, one notices, until he had completed his masterpiece, the trilogy *Sword of Honour*.

Why would a biographer who is prepared to spend so much time on an author be so careful to keep his subject's religion, politics, and social ambition at arm's length? Why be so ready to agree with his subject's critics? After *Pinfold* appeared, J.B. Priestley, an industrious, prosperous, but minor writer of left-wing sympathies, attacked Waugh as Pinfold, saying that Pinfold was haunted by the voices of Waugh's own bad conscience, telling him he was a fake. Stannard calls Priestley's piece a silly article, and quotes from Waugh's masterly reply; but he omits its most telling passages, discounts Waugh's own explanations of his experience, and in fact agrees with Priestley. He discovers Waugh's unconscious in the novel and hears "a barrage of self-hatred" in Pinfold's voices—a boring reading of a funny, moving novel.

Perhaps in this egalitarian age Martin Stannard has no wish to make himself obnoxious to colleagues or reviewers. Perhaps he is sincere in his disapproval. Yet so conventional an approach to a writer like Waugh shows a lack of enterprise. By now Waugh's attitudes present no threat to anyone's ambition or self-esteem, and his notorious snobbery is far too easy a target in an age so smugly proud of its social virtue. In Waugh's youth it was natural for a writer of his background and education to gravitate toward the fashionable end of society, as it was for his successors to ape the accents and attitudes of the working class. That is why, in his later years, flaunting his social habits proved an easy way of baiting critics. Besides, although he enjoyed smart company, Evelyn Waugh—as Stannard's evidence shows—had no illusions about his status as a self-made middle-class man of letters, and seems to have been proud of it and of his self-sufficiency.

It is hard to gauge Stannard's opinion of this aspect of Waugh's life. Sometimes he falls into a kind of reflexive snobbery of his own by tending to accept at face value the condescending assessments offered by some of Waugh's upper-class friends. Stannard presents Alfred Duff Cooper, who called Waugh a common little man, as an enviable man of the world. Yet Cooper, on the record as Stannard presents it, was a violent, lecherous, and brutal man, a second-rate politician and a negligible writer who, as a social climber, left Waugh standing. Waugh assessed him pretty accurately. Another example: since acknowledgment to Waugh's family is conspicuously missing from the book, it emerges that for private information and comment, especially about Waugh's children, the author must be drawing upon gossip from someone, probably a woman, who knew the family. The tone of these passages is superior, knowing, and censorious. Many of them make intolerable intrusions upon lives that are now none of Stannard's business, and some of them, to my certain knowledge, present questionable versions of characters and events. Waugh's aristocratic women friends were part of his publicity apparatus, and he of theirs. None of those friendships can have been uncomplicated, none of the judgments given entirely reliable.

Nonetheless, the chief casualty of Stannard's approach is neither the author nor his family, but his work. By treating literature as contingent upon psychology, the psychologizing literary biography always tends to diminish the importance of a writer's work. Reading the work according to his version of the life, Stannard reaches eccentric conclusions: *Work Suspended*, *Helena*, and *Pinfold* are better, more interesting works than *Brideshead* and *Sword of Honour*. And because this kind of biography reads the author's weaknesses in his writing, it leaves both novel and novelist equally disabled as witnesses. Only the biographer emerges unscathed from these proceedings.

Yet the whirligig of time issues in revenges. In 1952 Waugh, in a characteristic fit of high spirits, mounted a campaign against a visit by Tito. Stannard thinks this, like Waugh's description of postwar England as an occupied country, was the act of a crazy man, and in some indignation mounts his own pulpit to say so. Current events, however, have vindicated the novelist. Like other postwar arrangements that Waugh judged unfavorably, Tito's Yugoslavia has passed away, and that is why an open-minded reading of *Scott-King's Modern Europe* or *Sword of Honour* will provide a better understanding of Waugh's position than his biographer's account.

It is so much better either to know as little of writers as we usually know of scientists, or else to know them as we know our friends, with charity, generosity, and forbearance. That way we avoid a host of vulgar fallacies and inferences, including the biographical fallacy that a book is about its author, not about its ostensible subject matter, which in Waugh's case is religion, society, and civilization. For most of us who never met him, Evelyn Waugh is a name that we attach to some of the greatest prose written in English, and to a set of fictions that trace what Shakespeare called the form and pressure of the time with prophetic accuracy. The character we attach to that name is itself a fiction. If we were to try to form an idea of the real man from his books, we would have to say that he was a happy man, gifted and fortunate beyond most of our imaginings. Whether such a life would be judged happy within the terms of utopian debate is doubtful; that it was a happy life in the only real world any of us knows is unquestionable. <c

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Who Needs the Historical Jesus?

by Jacob Neusner

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever."
—Hebrews 13:8

A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus
by John P. Meier
New York: Doubleday;
484 pp., $28.00

The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant
by John Dominic Crossan
San Francisco: Harper;
507 pp., $30.00

◆

I have never heard of a book about "the historical Moses," and while philosophers study the thought of Sophocles and Plato, few bother to tell us what the historical Sophocles really said, as distinct from what Plato says he said. Muslims know the historical Mohammed from the Koran and do not ask professors in their Islamic universities to differentiate what sayings Mohammed really said from among the many more that the Koran says he said. But when people speak of "the historical Jesus," they (using the language of Christianity) imply that the record of Jesus Christ in the Gospels is not a factual, historical account at all, drawing a distinction between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history. While the quest for the historical Jesus forms a brief chapter in the Christian theology of our times, it is important because it defines how the Gospels are read in the secular academy and even in many Christian seminaries. Annual meetings where scholars debate and vote (using black, gray, pink, and red balls to represent what he certainly didn't say, probably didn't say, may have said, and certainly said) are routine; the

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Holy Spirit is pretty busy nowadays.

The stories of the miracles have challenged faith, but Christians have historically taken it as a mark of grace that they believe. The same data that have impressed scholars during the past two centuries made no profound impression on believers during the 18 prior ones. When historical study promised to distinguish fact from fiction, myth or legend from authentic event, Protestant theologians, mainly in Germany, undertook to write lives of Jesus that did not simply paraphrase the Gospels but stood in judgment of them. An attitude of systematic skepticism raised questions that prior generations scarcely conceived. These considerations engaged theological professors in many universities in Europe and in some American divinity schools and university religious studies departments in particular, with the result that a skeptical reading of the Gospels replaced a believing one. These two books on "the historical Jesus" take for granted two facts: first, that the Jesus Christ of the Gospels, the incarnate God who taught, performed wonders, died on the cross, rose from the dead, and sits at the right hand of God, is not the Jesus who actually lived; and, second, that historians know the difference between them. The Gospels' Jesus (Meier and Crossan assume) simply cannot pass the test of historical method; the Gospels tell us more than the truth that survives the application of this science. Accordingly, these authors undertake to identify the nuggets of history contained within the Gospel.

So the Christ of the Church's faith gives way to "a Mediterranean Jewish peasant," on the one hand, and "a marginal Jew," on the other. These are only two of the many pictures of Jesus that 200 years of critical historical scholarship have painted. The single fact that this "quest for the historical Jesus" has established beyond doubt is that each generation gets the Jesus it wants; pretty much every scholar comes up with a historical Jesus that suits his taste and judgment. The Gospels' four portraits, intersecting and concentric in many ways, have become legion.

This rigorous, unbelieving historicism actually takes up theological questions. Surely no question bears more profound theological implications for Christians than what the person they believe to be the incarnate God really, actually, truly said and did here on earth. But historical method, which knows nothing of the supernatural and looks upon miracles with unreserved stupefaction, presumes to answer them. The premises of the historical question (did it really happen, did he really say it?) rule out nearly the whole of Christian faith. For they are the routine premises that govern this historical job as they would any other: that any statement we may wish to make about Jesus is just another fact of history, like the fact that George Washington crossed the Delaware on Christmas night, 1776.

But statements (historical or otherwise) about the founders of religions present a truth of a different kind. Such statements not only bear weightier implications, but they appeal to sources distinct from the kind that record what George Washington did on a certain day

---

Jacob Neusner is Distinguished Research Professor of Religious Studies at the University of South Florida and author of A Rabbi Talks with Jesus: An Interfaith Exchange *(Doubleday, 1993) and, with Father Andrew M. Greeley, of* The Bible and Us: A Priest and a Rabbi Read the Scriptures Together *(Warner Books, 1990).*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in 1775. They are based upon revelation, not mere information; they claim, and those who value them believe, that they originate in God's revelation or inspiration. Asking the Gospels to give historical rather than gospel truth confuses theological truth with historical fact, diminishing them to the measurements of this world, treating Jesus as precisely the opposite of what Christianity has always known Him to be, which is unique.

When we speak of "the historical Jesus," therefore, we dissect a sacred subject with a secular scalpel, and in the confusion of categories of truth the patient dies on the operating table; the surgeons forget why they made their cut; they remove the heart and neglect to put it back. The statement "One and one are two," or "The Constitutional Convention met in 1787," is simply not of the same order as "Moses received the Torah at Sinai" or "Jesus Christ is Son of God."

What historical evidence can tell us whether someone really rose from the dead, or what God said to the prophet on Sinai? I cannot identify a historical method equal to the work of verifying the claim that God's Son was born to a virgin girl. And how can historians accustomed to explaining the causes of the Civil War speak of miracles, of men rising from the dead, and of other matters of broad belief? Historians working with miracle stories turn out something that is either paraphrastic of the faith, indifferent to it, or merely silly. In their work we have nothing other than theology masquerading as "critical history." If I were a Christian, I would ask why the crown of science has now to be placed upon the head of a Jesus reduced to this-worldly dimensions, adding that here is just another crown of thorns. In my own view as a rabbi, I say only that these books are simply and monumentally irrelevant. Premodern Christianity never produced this kind of writing, though it studied the life and teachings of Jesus; Christology was never confused with secular biography until the 19th century. Before then, distinguishing between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith would have produced utter incomprehension.

And yet, Protestant Christianity from the early 19th century and Roman Catholic Christianity since World War II have produced writers who suppose that the Gospels' Jesus and the actual man are not one and the same person. Instead of interpreting one saying in light of another and the whole in light of tradition or creed or theological premise, scholarship distinguishes, by various criteria, between things Jesus really said and things that the Church, responding to its own concerns, attributed to him later on.

These rules dictate the result of a scholar's study at the outset of his venture, since by definition they exclude most of what Christians by faith know to be truth: the miracles, the resurrection, the givenness of the Gospels' message, the (admittedly Catholic) conception that the Bible is the gift of the Church together with that other gift, tradition. But the quest begs the question: Should Christians concern themselves with this particular Jesus at all? And to whom does the life of a marginal Jew or a Mediterranean Jewish peasant (or a Galilean rabbi, or a homosexual magician, or any and all of the other historical Jesuses that people have produced) matter very much anyhow?

Nonetheless, for those interested not in "the historical Jesus" but in how contemporary scholarship claims to formulate as historical questions what is in fact a theological quest, John P. Meier's *A Marginal Jew* is a masterpiece of scholarship. Meier succeeds in bridging the gap between the expert and the lay reader. His is a beautiful piece of writing and research; it is difficult to imagine a finer presentation of the subject. The text is clear and undemanding, the notes superb and enlightening. Meier sets forth the evidence and the issue of method and then tells us what he thinks we can know about the life of Jesus before his public career (volume two will proceed from here).

Meier leads us along the path toward "the Jesus whom we can recover by using the scientific tools of modern historical research." He offers the following criteria for deciding which words actually came from Jesus: the criteria of embarrassment (the Church was eventually embarrassed by a saying, so it must be authentic), discontinuity (from Judaism), multiple attestation, coherence, and rejection and execution (Jesus did something to alienate powerful people). Meier lists as "dubious criteria" traces of Aramaic, accurate references to the Palestinian environment, vividness of narration, instances of the developing synoptic tradition, and historical presumption.

If you want to know what people think about the historical Jesus, you must start with Meier's book. But why bother looking for the historical Jesus at all? Meier responds with an essential theological answer: "the quest for the historical Jesus can be very useful if one is asking about faith seeking understanding, *i.e.*, theology, in a contemporary context . . . . faith in Christ today must be able to reflect on itself systematically in a way that will allow an appropriation of the quest for the historical Jesus into theology."

First, he explains, "the quest for the historical Jesus reminds Christians that faith in Christ is not just a vague existential attitude or a way of being in the world. Christian faith is the affirmation of and adherence to a particular person who said and did particular things in a particular time and place in human history. Second, the quest affirms that the risen Jesus is the same person who lived and died as a Jew . . . a person as truly and fully human . . . as any other human being. Third, the quest for the historical Jesus . . . has tended to emphasize the embarrassing, nonconformist aspects of Jesus. . . . Fourth, the historical Jesus sub-

THE RIGHT GUIDE 1993

"It touches all the bases. No other reference to organizations covers as much ground." (M. WARDER, EXECUTIVE V.P., THE ROCKFORD INSTITUTE); "Immensely useful directory." (R. HESSEN, HOOVER INSTITUTION); "Nowhere else can you find this information." (N. TANIS, PAST PRES. NATIONAL LIBRARIANS ASSOC.); "Well researched..scholarly..indispensable." (D. MARTIN, JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE); "Coverage of libertarian organizations is both careful and extensive." (W. NISKANEN, CATO INSTITUTE)

***THE RIGHT GUIDE* lists 2,500 organizations by name, address and contact; 500 in-depth profiles, programs, publications and more. Article-style features of prominent groups, including; The Ludwig von Mises Institute, Hillsdale College, Foundation Francisco Marroquin and more. Keyword Index.**

***PARTIAL LIST OF SUBJECTS COVERED:* Art-Literature-Culture, Economics, Education, Foreign Policy, Gold-Backed Money, Health Care, Immigration, Pro-Life. 456 pages, clothbound. $49.95 (includes shipping).**

Economics America, Inc.
612 Church St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Credit Cards (Visa/MC): (800) 878-6141

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

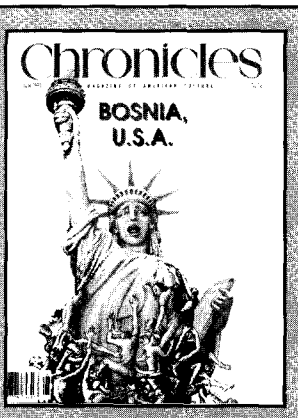
verts not just some ideologies but all ideologies." And he concludes, "the historical Jesus is a bulwark against the reduction of Christian faith . . . to 'relevant' ideology of any stripe. His refusal to be held fast by any given school of thought is what drives theologians onward into new paths; hence the historical Jesus remains a constant stimulus to theological renewal." Now, with the best will in the world, I find these apologia nothing other than constructive theology garbed as history, theological apologetics claiming the authority of dispassionate scholarship. Why ask history to settle questions that Meier himself specifies as fundamentally religious? And since when do matters of fact have any bearing on the truths of faith? Real historians do not give reasons such as these for writing historical biography. They do not have to.

John Dominic Crossan's *The Historical Jesus* gives us a very different book. While Meier concerns himself with issues of method, analysis of sources, and, above all, a broad account of the received scholarly literature, Crossan wishes to present something other than a reference work. He gives us an intensely powerful and poetic book, one by a great writer who is also an original and weighty scholar. Crossan's life of Jesus is a pronouncement, not merely an assessment, of the development of an academic discipline. He covers the many categories into which Jesus has been cast: visionary and teacher, peasant and protester, magician and prophet, bandit and messiah, rebel and revolutionary. He moves on to John and Jesus, kingdom and wisdom, magic and meal, death and burial, resurrection and authority.

The upshot of this eloquent story is: "That ecstatic vision and social program sought to rebuild a society upward from its grass roots but on principles of religious and economic egalitarianisms, with free healing brought directly to the peasant homes and free sharing of whatever they had in return. The deliberate conjunction of magic and meal, miracle and table, free comparison and open commensality, was a challenge launched not just at Judaism's strictest purity regulations, or even at the Mediterranean's patriarchal combination of honor and shame, patronage and clientage, but at civilization's eternal inclination to draw lines, invoke boundaries, establish hierarchies, and maintain discriminations." Clearly, we are in the hands of a master preacher, but a historian? I think not. Whoever heard of a historian who ends his book with a sermon, and a political one at that?

Denying a pure and narrow historical motive, Crossan concludes, "This book . . . is a scholarly reconstruction of the historical Jesus. And if one were to accept its formal methods and even their material investments, one could surely offer divergent interpretative conclusions about the reconstructible historical Jesus. But one cannot dismiss it or the search for the historical Jesus as mere reconstruction, as if reconstruction invalidated somehow the entire project. Because there is only reconstruction. For a believing Christian both the life of the word of God and the test of the Word of God are like a graded process of historical reconstruction. . . . If you cannot believe in something produced by reconstruction, you may have nothing left to believe in." Here Crossan betrays the true nature of his work: history in form, theology in all else—substance, intent, and result.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger makes the point in a variety of important and authoritative papers that, for the Christian faithful, at issue in the identity of the historical Jesus *is* the Christ of faith. If the question is theological truth, can the answer claim the status of secular fact? Crossan's somewhat strident concluding sentences imply that it can, and Meier's characteristically more prudent remarks say as much. Meier and Crossan, both masters of their craft, actually validate Ratzinger's insistence: let theology be theology, while (for exegetical, not theological purposes) addressing issues of history. No historical work explains itself so disingenuously as does work on the historical Jesus: from beginning, middle, to end, the issue is theological. But how can theological truth about supernatural reality and historical fact concerning this world's events be expected to meet? For religious faith speaks in the present tense about eternity—how things are and must always be—while historical facts tell us merely what was, once upon a time ©



A Chronicles Gift Subscription has long been a popular choice as a gift for family and friends. And now, our special rates make giving Chronicles a considerable value, too. Give a one-year subscription to Chronicles for only $24—you save $6 or 20% off the cover price.

TO ORDER BY PHONE CALL TOLL FREE

1-800-877-5459

Just complete and mail the adjoining coupon with your check or money order, and we'll promptly send each recipient a gift card in your name.

GIFT FOR

ADDRESS

MY NAME

ADDRESS

FOREIGN ORDERS ADD $6 PER SUBSCRIPTION. U.S. FUNDS ONLY. CHRONICLES SELLS FOR $2.50 A COPY.
SEND TO: CHRONICLES * P.O. BOX 800 * MT. MORRIS, IL 61054 XPD24

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Placed Person

by Stephen L. Tanner

Fidelity: Five Stories
by Wendell Berry
New York: Pantheon;
201 pp., $20.00

Sabbaths, 1987-1990
by Wendell Berry
Golgonooza Press: Ipswich, England
(distributed by Gnomon Press of
Frankfort, Kentucky);
48 pp., $9.50

◆

For about 30 years Wendell Berry has been writing fiction, poetry, and essays motivated by what he identifies as "a desire to make myself responsibly at home in this world and in my native and chosen place." I think the "world" he has in mind is that of mortality in general and of our chaotic urbanized, technologized, and morally problematized contemporary society in particular. It is also the world of nature, which is a primary concern of his writing. His "native and chosen place" is a region of Kentucky settled by his great-great-great-grandfather 190 years ago. Being "responsibly at home" seems for him to mean recognizing and honoring obligations both to the natural world and to other persons. It means responsible stewardship of land on the one hand and, on the other, a communal life that allows, in his words, "great loss to be recognized, suffered, and borne, and that makes possible some sort of consolation and renewal."

In the bookstore I frequent, Berry's books are located in a variety of sections: novels, short stories, essays, general nature, environmental studies. But though versatile in genre, his writing is surprisingly uniform in subject, theme, and tone. This uniformity is at least partly due to a center of values fostered by region and generation.

Berry studied writing at Stanford in the late 50's, a place and time that happened to bring distinguished writer-teachers like Wallace Stegner, Richard Scowcroft, Malcolm Cowley, and Frank O'Connor together with talented students like Wendell Berry, Ken Kesey, Larry McMurtry, Robert Stone, Tillie Olsen, and others. Ken Kesey once likened this class to the Green Bay Packers under Vince Lombardi. It is an interesting generation of writers because it embodies a major transition in American life. Consider Berry, Kesey, and McMurtry as examples. Born in the 30's in rural areas, they passed through childhood before TV and the electronic age. They knew something of the Depression, of the austerity of the war years, and of the rural afterglow of frontier life. All three have written warmly about frontier values in their regions: Kentucky, Oregon, and Texas. Even Kesey, who became a charismatic figure in the psychedelic counterculture of the 60's, has never strayed far from his roots, and his first two novels, which established his literary reputation, are glorifications of old-fashioned frontier self-reliance. Perhaps these writers have prized older ways of American life because as adults they have been bombarded by perplexing newer ways that make their lingering rural memories even more appealing. All three have written of persisting rural frontier values in conflict with urban technological society.

It may merely be coincidence that their teacher, Wallace Stegner, was also preoccupied with region and past. In any case, Wendell Berry, to narrow the focus again, writes with respectful love about rural communal life, and all the more movingly because he sees clearly how that life is endangered, just as certain species of natural life are endangered. His stories of the Port William membership, his fictional Kentucky community, reveal a process of old members dying and the young moving away to urban centers.

In one of his essays, Berry remarks that "whereas most American writers—and even most Americans—of my time are displaced persons, I am a placed person." And the obvious concern of much of his writing is with how to make the most of a sustained relationship with one particular place. He is alert to the dangers of condescension and animosity toward one's origins. He enjoys a situation most Americans do not. He farms land that has been in his family for generations. This stability in location and continuity in relationships with family and neighbors—dead as well as living—contrasts with the general transcience and disjointedness of American society. It provides Berry with a canvas for depicting what he has called the tragic nature of community life. Community life is tragic, he says in a recent essay titled "Writer and Region," "because it involves unremittingly the need to survive mortality, partiality, and evil." The relatively stable continuity of his world brings into relief the ancient cycle of loss and grief, hope and joy, and allows for a depiction of the forms and ceremonies of community that "return us to a renewed and corrected awareness of our partiality and mortality, but also to healing and to joy in a renewed awareness of our love and hope for one another."

Both of these books are continuations, additions to a body of stories and poems about the same places, characters, and habits of responding to nature. The five stories of *Fidelity*, though satisfying when read independently, resonate even more fully when read in the larger context of his stories about the Port William membership. Taken together they portray a community over several generations. Like the earlier stories, those of *Fidelity* are quiet, gentle, unassuming in style and traditional in technique. A family forgives a killing; a husband displays thoughtful concern for an ill wife; a soldier returns to his farm from war; a man removes without authorization his dying father from the sterile and alien environment of a large hospital so he can breath his last in his home woods; and neighbors check on the welfare of each other in time of high water.

Pretty tame stuff in our world of tabloids and "reality" and "docudrama" television. But Berry's genius lies in his ability to make commonplace goodness interesting. Even Tolstoy, that great guru of goodness, found unhappy families more interesting than happy ones. Berry is not ashamed to treat happiness, because in the context of his stories it results when the work and suffering of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

community are fully confronted and recognized. The community is happy in that it has survived its remembered tragedies, reshaped itself coherently around its known losses, and embraced its eccentrics, invalids, sinners, and fools.

Sabbaths, 1987-1990 continues a pattern of poetry begun in an earlier volume titled *Sabbaths* that included poems from 1979 to 1986. It is nature poetry of the kind Berry himself describes in his essay "A Secular Pilgrimage." Such poetry is secular in its detachment from institutionalized religion but a pilgrimage in its worshipful valuing of what is not entirely understood and in its religious aspiring beyond what is known. It is intensely responsive to the physical presence of the natural world and at the same time stimulated by the immanence of mystery or divinity in that physical presence. Berry suggests two important generative influences for such poetry. One is Oriental poetry, with "its directness and brevity, its involvement with the life of things, its sense that the poem does not create the poetry but is the revelation of a poetry that is in the world." The other is the prose writings of Thoreau, characterized by "a painstaking accuracy of observation, a most unsolemn and refreshing reverence, a sense of being involved in nature, and a rare exuberance and wit."

These influences are clearly discernible in Berry's own poetry. Following Thoreau, who said "the true harvest of my daily life is somewhat as intangible and indescribable as the tints of morning and evening," Berry writes, "I keep an inventory / Of wonders and of uncommercial goods." This inventory is kept primarily on Sabbath walks in nature, and he imbues "Sabbath" with rich metaphorical significance. He alludes to the first Sabbath, in which God rested while the Creation sang a hymn. It is echoes of that hymn that he seeks in his Sunday ramblings. The poems imply that when "field and woods" (farm and wilderness, cultivated and uncultivated land) are in harmony they awake reverberations of that first Sabbath anthem. And he mentions a final Sabbath with its song of the death of time and pain. These poems are variations on the theme of Sabbaths—from first to last, from literal to figurative.

The principal thread of analogy is that Sabbath is to workday as the solace of nature is to the sweat and labor of human society. The poems hint at a possible harmony in which the two elements complement each other:

> Then workday
> And Sabbath live together in
> one place.
> Though mortal, incomplete, that
> harmony
> Is our one possibility of peace.

Berry, as a farmer-environmentalist, is concerned with redeeming the land, being a partner with nature in healing the effects of harmful practices. He uses the notion of Sabbaths in these poems to express a rhythm of work and rest that informs the agrarian ideal.

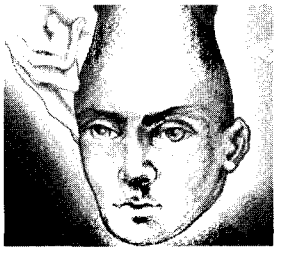
Some nature writing is little more than pandering to our modern alienation from the natural world, verbal nature walks to quiet the conscience of an indoor society implicated in environmental depredation. Wendell Berry's engagement with the natural world transcends mere description, or even the kind of appreciation that finds pleasant correspondences between nature and the human mind or soul. His is a daily tactile involvement that shapes his moral, aesthetic, and social values. The quiet gentleness and apparent simplicity of his writing is as hard won as his reclaimed land. He once alerted his readers to this:

> I am
> a man crude as any,
> gross of speech, intolerant,
> stubborn, angry, full
> of fits and furies. That I
> may have spoken well
> at times, is not natural.
> A wonder is what it is.

We have more than enough displaced writers providing us with fits and furies. We can benefit from a placed writer like Berry providing us with a practical voice concerning how to be responsibly at home in our world.

Stephen L. Tanner is a professor of English at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

LIBERAL ARTS



POLITICAL ORATORY, 1993

"This is a little tiny chunk of a huge plateful of stuff we'll have to deal with."

—Senator Alan K. Simpson, Republican from Wyoming, on the defeat of President Clinton's economic stimulus bill.

Straight Talk

by David Gordon

Paved With Good Intentions: The Failure of Race Relations in Contemporary America
by Jared Taylor
New York: Carroll & Graf; 416 pp., $22.95

◆

A reviewer of Jared Taylor's impressive new book faces a dilemma. If a book's principal thesis is valid, a critic must of course say so. But a difficulty arises in the present instance. According to Taylor, public orthodoxy inhibits discussion of race relations in our country. Dissenters from this orthodoxy face retribution. With remarkable courage, Taylor has defied the conventions whose existence he decries. It is exactly at this point that the problem I have referred to takes shape. The sanctions that Taylor has risked threaten not just him, but those who tender him their support. Reviewers who praise him must, it seems, partake of his temerity. Now the difficulty strikes home, in a way I cannot ignore. I entirely lack Taylor's boldness: what, then, am I to do? I can only hope that this review does not fall into the wrong hands, since any honest reader must recognize the genuine worth of *Paved With Good Intentions*.

Taylor identifies a fundamental error at the heart of most discussions of American blacks and their difficulties: the assumption that "whites are responsible for the problems blacks face." Whites bear this responsibility because they en-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

slaved blacks in the past and because the abolition of slavery only resulted in new forms of oppression that left blacks hardly better off than before. Though prospects for blacks have in recent years improved, the damage that racism continues to cause remains of vast dimensions. Yet Taylor maintains that this doctrine really demeans blacks: "It implies that blacks are helpless and cannot make progress unless whites transform themselves." "Implies," I think, goes too far, since one might hold whites responsible for the low position of blacks but maintain that blacks can still act to better their situation. But no doubt most proponents of the doctrine see it in just the way Taylor describes.

The position to which Taylor takes vigorous exception relies on one part of St. Paul's definition of faith: "the evidence of things not seen." To lay bare the lack of substance in the "white-racism" account, our author deploys three main arguments. First, he posits that empirical evidence lends little support to the view that blacks must constantly battle discrimination. A study he cites investigated bias in employment through the dispatch for interviews of whites and blacks with identical job qualifications and concluded that blacks and whites did not significantly differ in the offers of employment they received. Another study failed to substantiate the oft-repeated claim that the police treat blacks worse than whites. Here, it seems to me, Taylor is on exactly the right track: the prevalence of white racism is a hypothesis to be tested, not a social fact to be taken for granted.

Having thrown into question the key assumption of contemporary *bien pensants*, Taylor next poses a challenge. If white racism injures blacks, what about other groups that have in the past suffered from severe discrimination? Surely, "other nonwhite races should face obstacles similar to those faced by blacks." Once more, Taylor contends, the facts falsify the hypothesis under test. Chinese- and Japanese-Americans have attained high levels of employment and income, fully comparable to those of whites, despite the invidious prejudices they faced in the not-far-distant past. If they have surmounted the obstacles thrown in their way, why cannot blacks confront with equal tenacity *their* disadvantages?

Finally, whatever one thinks of the civil rights movement, no one can deny its impact: "America has made historically unprecedented efforts to correct the evils of the past." As racism has diminished, one would expect the situation of blacks to have improved concomitantly—if indeed the white-racism hypothesis is true. In fact, rates of illegitimacy, crime, and drug use among blacks have increased, not lessened, since the onset of the civil rights revolution. Once more, the racism hypothesis falls to the ground.

I suspect that Taylor's opponents will remain unconvinced, but, if intellectually honest, they must at least confront his arguments. How to do so? They might weaken the racism hypothesis so that it asserts a tendency rather than an inevitable connection: racism, one could argue, confronts its victims with problems they *may* be unable to overcome. If a group can meet discrimination successfully, as the Asians have done, well and good, but if blacks cannot, racism remains part of the explanation for their troubles. But to this rejoinder, Taylor could respond once more with his first argument: positing the malign social effects of racism is itself a hypothesis that demands investigation.

Taylor makes it abundantly clear that wide acceptance of the white-racism explanation has had drastic consequences. Because of the evils imputed to racism, massive programs of affirmative action have become an entrenched feature of our national life. "The original impetus for affirmative action was understandable. If racist barriers had kept large numbers of talented blacks from getting good jobs or going to good schools, such people would surely be found with little effort. Once found and given equal opportunity, they would succeed at the same rates as whites." Unfortunately, the expectations that initially motivated affirmative action have not been borne out; blacks have not responded to the boost offered them with a rush toward the higher-paying professions. But advocates of reverse discrimination cling to their cherished dogmas. If the programs have not succeeded as intended, the solution is obvious: we must have many more of the same programs.

As Taylor documents substantially, racial quotas have become virtually unavoidable. No important university lacks an "affirmative-action officer," while tests used by police and fire departments have again and again been revised to ensure "correct" results. Does not justice demand the abolition of such blatant measures of discrimination? Proponents of affirmative action, such as the legal philosopher Ronald Dworkin, would, I think, reply to Taylor with a demurrer. White racism, in their view, has so blighted the prospects of blacks that no quick remedy will work: affirmative action must remain in place for the indefinite future. And what of whites deprived of jobs? This, so far as I can make out, is held to involve no injustice; as Dworkin explains in convoluted fashion, "equal respect" does not require "equal treatment." Orwell's "some are more equal than others" at once springs to mind.

Whatever the sins of affirmative action, the contemporary system of welfare incorporates an even more harmful feature. Affirmative action can do nothing for those blacks who have no jobs at all. Since—obviously—white racism stands indicted for the situation of the underclass, it is the duty of the white majority to ameliorate their plight. A vast system of welfare, constantly extended, endeavors to assist members of the underclass until they can stand on their own feet to take sufficient advantage of the "equal" opportunity affirmative action offers them. But once more, Taylor insists that the contentions of liberal orthodoxy be subject to empirical inquiry. Far from helping blacks, the welfare system, he argues, has worsened their situation, principally by its effects on the family. High rates of illegitimacy have severely weakened the black family: many black children who live in large cities have little if any contact with their fathers. The collapse of the black family, Taylor contends, has led to precisely the increases in poverty, unemployment, and crime ascribed by conventional wisdom to white racism. And the welfare system has greatly contributed to the demise of the black family, since young women have no financial incentive to avoid pregnancy until marriage. They know that others will subsidize any children they have.

Taylor's analysis poses an urgent task for contemporary social science. If he is right, the entire welfare system needs to be reexamined: the benefits the system is supposed to bring must be weighed against the damaging consequences Taylor has adduced. Further, even those who continue to blame white racism for the problems of blacks need to confront Taylor's critique of welfare. If the welfare system worsens the position of blacks,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

appeals to the white-racism hypothesis cannot justify its continuance. Perhaps of even more vital significance than the details of the book's argument, however, is the tone of its discussion. In an area too often dominated by catch-phrases and emotion, this calm appeal to reason and fact stands out as a model of informed social analysis.

David Gordon is a senior fellow of the Ludwig von Mises Institute. He is the author of Resurrecting Marx *(Transaction Books, 1990).*

Speech for Speech's Sake

by Brian Robertson

Free Speech for Me—But Not for Thee: How the American Left and Right Relentlessly Censor Each Other
by Nat Hentoff
New York: Harper Collins;
392 pp., $25.00

◆

One of the unfortunate after-effects of the so-called "Red Scare" of the early 50's was the triumph of the "no limits" interpretation of the First Amendment, which has poisoned American political thought ever since. It goes something like this: the McCarthyite "reign of terror" permanently discredited the idea that you can suppress speech in a free society, whatever the reason (in this case political treason). Once you start to draw limits on free expression, whether it be political, artistic, or literary, you are setting up a situation in which the opinions and standards of the few are imposed on the many. Only if every member of society has the freedom to say, write, read, or buy whatever he pleases can we be assured of the access to ideas that is the guardian and embodiment of freedom. Words or images can never harm people; only the attempt to suppress them can.

In this view, "expression" is construed so broadly that almost no behavior falls outside its purview; it encompasses everything from pornography to flag-burning. This absolutism with regard to expression (which now holds sway at the majority of law schools and with a majority of the Supreme Court) has its roots in relativism: in a world in which truth is impossible to determine, no idea may be safely forbidden. It follows that the vitality of a culture can be measured by the diversity of "expression" therein—one of the sillier liberal conceits.

For Nat Hentoff, the "no limits" theory of speech is something of a creed. In his new book, Hentoff explores the current threats to this ideal of a tolerant, free society. He finds—despite the book's subtitle, which implies a rough equality of offenses from right and left—that the vast majority of attempts to suppress speech today come from a new generation of leftists committed to enforcing sensitivity, tolerance, and politically correct thinking by any means necessary. The tendencies of the Religious Right don't even come close (indeed, Mr. Hentoff has to resurrect the story of the obscenity convictions of comedian Lenny Bruce—who died over a quarter century ago—to find a good example of right-wing persecution). The fact that the existence of this new thought police does not raise the ire of the very same crowd that goes ballistic when someone suggests taking hard-core porn off the stands at the local 7-Eleven might lead one to think that many of them never really believed that stuff about freedom of expression in the first place—they were just using it for the purposes of secularizing the culture. With Hentoff we have a genuine believer: an old-style First Amendment liberal who is consistent in his application of the "no limits" theory of speech, even when that means tolerating politically incorrect viewpoints.

Those who deny that we are in the midst of a war over culture in this country need only read Hentoff's book to be disabused of that delusion. It is a collection of tales from the front lines of that war, focusing on battles over free speech in academia and the public education establishment, where the stakes are highest. The picture that emerges is frightening. Never has the intellectual atmosphere at our institutions of higher learning been so stifling, and, as Mr. Hentoff documents, it is perhaps most stifling in the most elite of these institutions. Today, it is no longer Main Street but the Ivy League where one finds the most narrow-mindedness, conformity, and simple ignorance. It seems, from Mr. Hentoff's account, that the young people who populate these supposed bastions of free discussion and thought are so lacking in historical perspective that they firmly believe the solution to the world's problems is to eliminate all "discriminatory" and "offensive" language from our cultural discourse, both public and private. Even tenured professors try to steer clear of "controversial" subjects for fear of being denounced as "insensitive" by zealous thought police (a fear much more evident today than during the largely fictional McCarthyite "reign of terror").

Because radical feminism and multiculturalism are the reigning orthodoxies at these institutions, what this sensitivity means in practice is an all-out assault on the Western tradition in philosophy and morality. The extent to which these insidious ideologies serve as covers for a shallow materialism just beneath the ideological surface is truly extraordinary. Anyone who dares, for instance, to point out that the feminist agenda of sex-without-consequences has been a disaster for both women and children, leading to soaring rates of illegitimacy, divorce, and abortion, can be dismissed as one who wants to keep women from positions of power and influence. By successfully putting such talk outside the realm of civilized discourse, feminists are able to ignore the question of how much their politics are driven by a desire to avoid the consequences of irresponsible behavior rather than by some altruistic concern for women's rights.

Likewise, the battle over cultural diversity in the curriculum at elite universities often obscures the fact that the roots of the controversy are the quota policies of the schools themselves. Unfortunately, the effect of admitting woefully unprepared minority students in order to meet quotas is not diversity but bitterness and resentment. When faced with "core curriculum" courses that require a high degree of intellectual discipline, many of these students are confirmed in their suspicion that the entire university system is stacked against their success and hence demand that other cultural perspectives be represented. The real scandal is that so many universities cave in to such bogus claims instead of reexamining their own admission policies. The fiction that those policies are motivated by a genuine concern for the welfare of minority students is belied by the fact that so large a percentage of blacks admitted to college in this country drop out before graduating. As Thomas Sowell has suggested, these

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

same students would fare much better at local community colleges or vocational schools that have less prestige than the elite four-year colleges. Why have these cynical admissions policies not provoked more protest? Precisely because the appearance of compassion and sensitivity toward minorities is easier than the application of hardheaded policies that would actually work to their benefit.

What Hentoff sees as a struggle over the right to full expression, the participants view as a battle over who will control the culture. And they are correct; arguments of constitutional interpretation become irrelevant when the same First Amendment is used to ban public displays of Christmas scenes and to demand public funding of a crucifix submerged in urine. This is how shamelessly inconsistent the arguments of the secularists have become. They ban classic literature like *Huckleberry Finn* on the grounds that it includes offensive racist language and force students to read modern trash that offends their religious beliefs; expel students for satirizing gay activist groups or displaying Confederate flags; shout down conservative speakers they disagree with; set up centers for women's rights that systematically exclude women who are anti-abortion; enact speech codes that enforce sensitivity toward everyone but white males and Christians; conduct smear campaigns against prominent public figures who challenge p.c. clichés; prevent debate in law schools over the issue of homosexual custody of children . . . Hentoff's list is just the tip of the iceberg. One senses his amazement at the sheer gutlessness of today's campus radicals; rather than engage the opposition with arguments, they are all too willing to shut down debate where they have the power to do so—which is almost everywhere in the media and in academia. Revolutionaries once were made of tougher stuff.

But ironically, the roots of this new fascism grow from the no-limits absolutism of Hentoff and his fellow First Amendment ideologues. The notion that there is no higher expression of democracy and freedom than a society that tolerates absolutely everything must ultimately fail. Democratic societies by their very nature seek a sort of *corporate* expression whereby they act to set standards and make laws regarding acceptable behavior. Whether those standards should be derived from a relativist secularism or a moral tradition infused by Christian revelation is the only relevant question in our declining Western society. At this point, you must pick a side or step aside. Mr. Hentoff, in the current feminist jargon, "just doesn't get it."

Brian Robertson is a freelance writer living in Princeton, New Jersey.

Airs, Waters, Places

by Stephen Bodio

Named in Stone and Sky:
An Arizona Anthology
Edited by Gregory McNamee
Tucson: University of Arizona Press;
194 pp., $15.95

◆

I might say at the onset that I am usually not a big fan of anthologies, though I have edited one; most end up unwieldy grab bags of vaguely related material. This is emphatically *not* the case with Gregory McNamee's *Named in Stone and Sky*, a collection of Southwestern material that marvelously coheres into a portrait of this harsh and wonderful region. To assemble his portrait, McNamee does not rely on "literature" only, even in its broadest definition. He includes poetry and bits of fiction, but also searches out Native American songs and prayers, explorers' diaries, and scientists' writings. He is not afraid to add Zane Grey and the doggerel of old cowboys. The result may be the best local anthology I know. While he nods respectfully to *The Last Best Place*, a collection of Montanan literature by Annick Smith and William Kittredge published in 1988, I consider his to be a much better book.

McNamee has organized this book innovatively, not in chronological order or by segregating fact from fiction, prose from poetry, but around broad themes of "Airs," "Waters," and "Places." He knows, as did the New Mexican historian Ross Calvin (whose writings on the Gila River he includes) that "sky determines," that dryness and the uncertain water supply have shaped everything in the Southwest from the evolution of leaves to the (often) impermanence of settlement. He is a brave enough editor to cut in quick snippets from many authors and compose them into a kind of verbal collage, while allowing others to stretch out—a fictional thunderstorm from Barbara Kingsolver, an almost-fatal adventure from the late Edward Abbey. In between, he comments and informs. He is an editor who wants you to learn the history of the land he loves, to use its traditions to heal its scars and those of its peoples. But he is also one who can comfortably refer to Sir Richard Burton and C.M. Doughty as fellow "desert rats"; serious, but not solemn.

Reading the anthology, you come to know the Southwest's landscapes gradually. McNamee opens with a Navajo chant, passes to an 18th-century Jesuit's account of the climate that still rings true, and gives us some passages from John Van Dyke and Ross Calvin that remind us that some of the best "visual" landscape writing has been inspired by desert light. There is the storm by Barbara Kingsolver already mentioned, so good it makes me envious—I have written a couple of Southwestern thunderstorm scenes, but none so wonderful. Soon, with "Waters," we are in the realm of exactly *what* "sky determines," up in the high mountains that in the winter resemble Montana, down in the canyons with M.H. Salmon, wondering what will be left wild. A reader from "normal" well-watered areas will learn a little about the importance of water rights in the West and about how water is wasted. Biologist Gary Nabhan details how the land has never completely recovered since the drought of 1891, and how the cities are sucking the aquifer dry.

But the real delights of the collection for me are in "Places," which takes up about half of the book. Just as you have adjusted to the idea of aridity punctuated by cloudbursts, McNamee will remind you of the difficulty of defining the term "desert" at all, quoting the plant geographer Forrest Shreve, who classifies the Upper Sonoran "desert" as a semitropical dry forest. Architectural critic Reyner Banham reminds us that the original definition had more to do with "deserted" than "dry," and tells how he has never spent a day in the desert that he didn't see other people. (I can hear Ed Abbey's ghost grumbling that he might have, if he ever got off the road.)

This section is amazingly diverse. McNamee has included rude Spanish poetry from the *Diccionario Malcriado*, Catholico-Yaqui creation myths in which Jesus carelessly creates the mountains of Arizona by spilling cornmeal from a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pouch his mother gave him, Charles Bowden's combination of apocalyptic fury with Cormac McCarthyesque description, Abbey's adventure, and Page Stegner's silly-ass Beemer wanderings in the footsteps of his betters. (McNamee doesn't have to approve of his contributors; he all but destroys D.H. Lawrence by allowing him a drawn-out, obtuse, whiny plaint, in which the British novelist decries a trail as "utterly bumpy and horrible.") There is another reminder—temporal this time—of the region's greater-than-human scale, as biologist Larry Stevens speculates on whether the slow propagation of Joshua trees results from their seeds' dependence on being ingested by the "recently" extinct giant ground sloth. Aldo Leopold continues in this perspective, thinking like a mountain. And, suddenly, we're back in modern times—road time—as Jack Kerouac runs through Arizona fast, as most tourists do. McNamee's switches would look like showing off if he didn't perform them so well.

There are more treasures here, more than I can easily note. I never knew that George Simenon lived in Arizona (he writes like a flash flood). I like McNamee's championing of good, too-obscure living writers like M.H. Salmon and Rob Schultheis, both longtime favorites of mine. I like his ethnic mix—not politically correct, just rich as our tricultural area really is.

I have only one complaint, and it is a small one. On the first page, McNamee opens: "Begin on the gunsight northern line and follow the alternating sandstone escarpments and dry washes . . ." He is drawing a line around the state of Arizona. I wish he would do a similar anthology for the whole dry basin-and-range Southwest, the biological and geographical province west of the Pecos, southeast of the sage deserts, north of the tropical part of Mexico. It would be a more natural grouping, as he tacitly acknowledges in the introduction. And that way he could include Cormac McCarthy, Tony Hillerman, Frank Doble . . . and probably a hundred writers this New Mexican hasn't even heard of yet.

Stephen Bodio is the author of Querencia. *He writes from Magdalena, New Mexico.*

M•O•V•I•N•G?

LET US KNOW BEFORE YOU GO !

To assure uninterrupted delivery of CHRONICLES please notify us in advance. Send change of address on this form with the mailing label from your latest issue of CHRONICLES to:

Subscription Department
CHRONICLES
P.O. Box 800
Mount Morris, Illinois 61054

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE ZIP

Volodya Again

by J.O. Tate

Horowitz: His Life and Music
by Harold C. Schonberg
New York: Simon & Schuster;
428 pp., $27.50

◆

The stores are still vending the recordings of Vladimir Horowitz, the imposing pianist whose career is now as lucrative as it was during his lifetime. Nearly all of his work is out on compact disc, from sources dating back to the 1920's. Merit and celebrity coincide in this case, as they sometimes do—and when they do, we would like to understand why. That means it's time to hit the books.

This second biography of Vladimir Horowitz (1903-1989) barely mentions the existence of the first one—Glenn Plaskin's effort of a decade ago. And I suppose that is just as well, since Plaskin's book kept regressing to the Kitty Kelley mode and the tone of an exposé. Plaskin's book was spoiled by what still seems to be unresolved anger and an exploitative agenda. Certainly, no one can make such criticisms of Schonberg's study, which has a couple of advantages in addition to the obvious absence of malice.

One of these advantages is ten additional years of perspective. In that time, Horowitz kept appearing and recording and even returned to Russia in a move that rounded off his life and actually had something to do with global politics. Schonberg's view of Horowitz is more comprehensive and more comprehending for that reason, and for others.

Another advantage is the author's lifetime of devotion to music and performance, and especially to the piano. Harold C. Schonberg has been leading his own "Romantic revival" since at least the 1950's in his books and reviews, and in Horowitz he finds the personification of 19th-century virtuosity. Schonberg's *Horowitz* is the book he was born to write. His themes of interpretative freedom and the singing line naturally find themselves exemplified in his subject. His love of great piano-playing finds its fulfillment in this treatment of just that subject. The puritanism, inflexible rhythm, and pseudo-historical consciousness that mar the performance of so much music today are all rebuked by the example of Horowitz.

And there is another advantage, I think. A biographer (like his subject) has to make up his mind about what Yeats called "perfection of the life or of the work." Schonberg has made his choice: he focuses on Horowitz's claim to fame and subordinates, though he does not scant, the personal elements. I think he is right to do so. Still, in describing the burden of musical prodigy and in showing the extent of Horowitz's self-absorption, Schonberg has at least by implication reckoned the cost in personal misery of so much musical achievement. Horowitz himself tried to separate life and art in many ways—in his dandyism, his isolation, his neurasthenia, his inversion, and his neglect of others, as well as in his mastery, his self-imposed challenges, and even his triumphs of connection with the public he teased. He paid a price in his mental and physical health, in his place in musical history, and even in his music-making. To some degree, I think Horowitz should be called to account a bit more strictly than Schonberg does.

Schonberg does his best work in outlining the Romantic context of Horo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

witz's background. He shows its strength in validating Horowitz's individuality as such performers as Battistini, Rachmaninoff, Friedman, and Kreisler (and the musical culture they represented) passed away, leaving Horowitz very nearly "The Last Romantic," as his publicists claimed. However, I also believe Schonberg lets a paradox escape him. Until 1961, Horowitz had always appeared in the West as a "modernizer"—the young savage of the late 20's with the close-cropped hair. Then in America he was a Red Seal artist with Toscanini and Heifetz—streamlining, even reductionist vehicles of the repudiation of Romanticism. Was it "Romantic" to play like a machine? Horowitz was sometimes a voice of industrialism and a destroyer of nostalgia in the 1940's and 1950's. Schonberg lets this point go, for example, in considering the 1932 landmark recording of Liszt's Sonata in B minor.

Then, too, he has changed his evaluations of certain recordings—what were once deemed as flawed in various ways are now subsumed in the glory of Horowitz's best work. And I think Schonberg is just plain wrong about Horowitz's interlocking octaves at the end of Chopin's Scherzo in B minor. The point is not that his effect can be justified, but that the unison scales Chopin wrote are harder to bring off: Horowitz's "effect" is an evasion of difficulty that can hardly be classified as "virtuosity"—"inappropriate cheap stunt" would be more like it, though a stunt at the highest level, to be sure.

Furthermore, since music is such a vital part of culture, the testimony of Horowitz's few pupils shows not how much but how little he connected with them. Horowitz performed, but he didn't do much to pass on what he knew, as other great pianists such as Schnabel, Cortot, and Serkin did pedagogically and in print. Horowitz's narcissism was a crippling limitation.

But never mind—the man was a hero of the keyboard. Schonberg's is a stirring and convincing book, and he is right that Horowitz was the greatest pianist of the second half of the 20th century. He is right that Horowitz had a demonic quality that actually scared people. He is right that Horowitz had an uncanny ability to control sound, to weave textures, and to fill the biggest hall with unique sonorities. And he has a point in calling for a reassessment of even Horowitz's Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert.

Schonberg's *Horowitz* transcends its subject, even as Horowitz's recorded performances are more than individual statements. The recreative freedom, lyric-dramatic projection, and sustained line of Horowitz's best work remind us of how much we have lost in disconnecting ourselves from the past. And that gap, a fissure running back to the outburst of modernism and the First World War, has swallowed up more than our musical heritage.

J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

The Afterworld

by Charles Edward Eaton

Summer goes again, and you release its fable—
Tanned swimmers in blue pools, blue seas, the specters of fading roses,
The glistening lust for life, the predator at table.

All the lovers, all the grapes and melons that you knew—
I kissed the girl, ate the fruit with her,
And fantasized that melon rind offered voyages of love in its canoe.

The thing we like the most is just the thing that keeps on coming after—
The caressive sun on skin made stringent by the pool,
The comic songs from sentimental ones, from those romantic tears the sparkling laughter.

This is what the fable says, this is what it does for us:
Pears come after peaches, melons. The hammock, packed with power,
Sways and sways—a basket for late pathos.

Or so it was, to me, in early June related.
Such relatives that came to picnic on my lawn!—
The muscled one looked like Apollo, the predator was never sated.

Still, in moonlight, comes a time for one last, rueful kiss:
Gold figures folded in the pool, blue worlds we fully occupied—
The afterthought is asking now if tales of autumn hold anything like this.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letter From Serbia

by Momcilo Selic

Notes From the Front, Part II

◆

Basically, the Yugoslav problem is simple: it is a war of vanities, of various ethnic and religious groups vying for supremacy. If this sounds familiar to American and other Western readers, the parallel is intentional: after all, it was Tito, the archcommunist, who first implemented the New World Order of former President George Bush, of Henry Kissinger and the Trilateral Commission, and of the vintage Council on Foreign Relations. All the necessary components were there, in the Yugoslavia of 1945 to 1991: socialism (communism), obligatory internationalism (the "Salad Bowl" concept), a bureaucratic structure to keep the balance between the warring factions (a huge federal, state, and municipal administration), phony humanism and fake "democracy" (lip service to the various liberal holy causes, such as "sharing and caring," "compassion," "ecumenism," etc.), with—to top it all off—an actual if informal aristocracy to oversee the whole works.

Serbs are being crucified today because they will not submit themselves to the New World Order, which they barely survived the first time around. In 1914, there were over eight million Serbs in the Balkans—they were, by far, the largest and the most important nation in the region. Today, after two successful genocides—the Austro-Hungarian in World War I and the Croat and Muslim in World War II—the current one is proving too much for the remaining ten million Serbs: their archenemies, the Albanians, the Muslims, the Croats, the Bulgars, the Magyars, have, in some cases, doubled or tripled their populations and are being egged on by the several-times-defeated Germans, Austrians, and Turks.

On July 22, 1941, before a cheering Croat crowd, Mile Budak, a novelist and the Croat Minister of Cults and Faiths, publicly said that the Independent State of Croatia was, as a matter of state policy, going to "kill one third of [its] Serbs, convert a third to Roman Catholicism, and expel the remaining third into Serbia." Dobroslav Paraga—once an Amnesty International prisoner of conscience, today the head of HOS, a militant Croat organization—is calling for a Croat invasion of Belgrade, of the kind that made some German cities in the Thirty Years War beg for deliverance from "the Croats, the fire, and the pest."

Apparently, the Croats, still only a third as numerous as the Serbs, are willing to ignite a world war in order to prove their eminence to themselves. For a nation that was, for almost a thousand years, the subject of Hungary, which in turn became the subject of Austria, the Croats' claims to fame are curious. According to their own centuries-old propaganda, they are one of the foremost nations of the world and have contributed mightily to the pool of the world's knowledge and artistic accomplishment. Instrumentalized by pan-German imperialism (during World War II, some Croat historians sought their national origins among the Goths), as well as by expansionist Roman Catholicism, the Croats have so far committed unpardonable crimes against their neighbors, the Serbs. During the last 150 years, under Austro-Hungarian aegis, they have converted over a million Serbs to Roman Catholicism, renaming them "Croats" in the process. (Croat national doctrine does not recognize the existence of Roman Catholic Serbs, as, for instance, the inhabitants of Dubrovnik and some other coastal cities, until quite recently, used to call themselves.)

To facilitate the transmutation of their Slavic neighbors into "Croats," they also took a Herzegovinian Serb dialect for their literary language, though very few Croats spoke it as their own. (Native Croat dialects are the Slovene-like *Kajkavski*, spoken around Zagreb, and *Ikavski* and *Cakavski*, spoken on the Adriatic Coast, while *Stekavski*—today's official Croatian—is an eminently Serb language, spoken by at least three-quarters of all Serbs.) Worst of all, from the Serb point of view, the Croats have transferred *their* sins upon *us*, blaming *us* for what *they* did—and are still doing—to us, making use of an opportune crack in the fabric of this planet's sanity and misperceived self-interest.

The Serbs were the first—and the only—Balkan people to free themselves from the Ottomans through their own efforts (the Greeks and the Bulgarians achieved their liberation with British and Russian aid). In fact, the Serbs threw off the Turkish yoke despite long-standing British, French, and Austrian support of their Asiatic occupiers. Such historical tenacity should, in the case of normal reasoning, give pause to those who have written the Serbs off so easily because of their recent stumbling through the bog of communist insanity, foisted upon them—at Teheran and Yalta—by Joseph Stalin and a compliant West. There would have been no World War I had legitimate Serb claims to Serb Bosnia been taken into account. Gavrilo Princip, then, would not have felt forced to fire his bullet into Franz Ferdinand, and there would have been no Russian Revolution, no World War II, no Cold War, none of all this that's killing us today.

When in 1991, exactly 50 years after the first Jasenovac death camp, the Croats began brandishing their World War II checkerboard flags and singing songs like "Who needs the dark red wine / When Serb blood is just as fine!" the Serbs of Croatia and Bosnia—a quarter of all the existing Serbs—had little choice but to prepare for the worst. The war itself, however, was started by Croat President Franjo Tudjman, who in a recent public speech stated that "Croatia could have accepted the reordering of the Yugoslav Federation, but, without war, we would not have got our independence."

As for the Jasenovac Memorial Museum itself, it has been sacked by the Croat Army, and all its exhibits of the Serb, the Jewish, and the Gypsy holocausts have been obliterated. Unfortunately for the Ustashi, a substantial Jasenovac archive still exists in Banja Luka, a Bosnian city under Serb control. Franjo Tudjman had plans to remake the museum into a "memorial for all the dead in World War

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

II" (for the Ustashi and their victims or, more explicitly, for the Ustashi headsman, Pero Brzica, and the 1,350 Serbs he had butchered in a single night, to set a record and win a wager he had made with his pals). It would be interesting to speculate how Jews would have reacted had someone suggested, say, that Auschwitz be refashioned into a monument to the murdered Jews *and* their SS executioners, but such an idea is still to be tested, as the whole episode with Jasenovac is yet to be reported by the Western media.

In their cover-up of their World War II *magnum crimen* against humanity (or, at least, its Serb component), the Croats have taken the tack chosen only by the Turks in their denial of the Armenian genocide. Three million Armenian men, women, and children were massacred by the Turkish Army, Turkish authorities, and Kurdish irregulars in 1915, while the West kept silent (except for a few isolated voices, such as Theodore Roosevelt's). Eighty years after this extensively—and intensively—documented event, the Turkish government, as well as Turkish public figures, men of learning, historians, and poets, all deny that it took place at all. This denial has caused an endemic Armenian terrorism whose sole aim is to force the Turks—a nation whose historic record in the countries it has occupied is notorious—to admit their deed. For those in the West who lecture the Armenians, and the Serbs, on the pastness of history while at the same time airing daily newscasts reminiscing about the Battle of Britain, or the victory at el-Alamein, or, still more indicatively, carefully refraining from even suggesting to Jews that *their* past has no bearing on the present, the Serb and Armenian plight should give some food for thought.

Would I—a 47-year-old with back trouble and a record of pulmonary TB—have taken a rifle and gone, bundled up in a Yugoslav Army standard-issue field jacket, to defend Serb Kraina had no history taken place? Would I, instead of completing my short stories and novels, piled up two feet thick on my desk after a 20-year communist ban on my writing, have taken the pen to write *this* account, about something almost banal to my people but (intentionally, it seems) unknown to the "Free World," had no "history" occurred?

In Kraina, and in Bosnia, I have seen the best of my nation live—and die—to keep vigorous the spirit of what has made Europe, and the West in general, great. Gentle of bearing but ferocious in battle, the Kraina soldiers who helped me clean and assemble my automatic rifle on a position overlooking the blue Adriatic Sea are an assurance—to me *and* to the West—that in the next war between us and them who would disinherit us—all those racially, socially, religiously, ethnically, and economically overconscious masses of what is euphemistically called the Third and Fourth World—there will stand a dam, a pale, a manned bastion whose guard never sleeps nor sinks into frivolous complacency.

So far, Serbs have held back from becoming an imperial people. Like the Armenians, their greatest shortcoming seems to be the misfortune to live athwart important strategic communications, an involuntary obstacle to the imperial expansion of others: Germans, in the case of the Serbs, and Turks, in the case of the Armenians. But all this may change: those like the Croats and the Albanians who have let the genie out of the bottle may yet prod the Serbs—a nation that, in the time of the Black Prince of England, numbered, like the English, 4 million souls—to turn protectively imperialist and to claim for themselves the whole territory of the former Yugoslavia, without ever again sharing it with anyone.

So far, Serbs have restrained themselves from assimilating, annihilating, or banishing others on their territory: Greeks, Bulgars, Magyars, Croats, Muslims, and Albanians have, until the time of this writing, lived side by side with Serbs, never having to suffer for it. So far, others have taken from the Serb national being to augment *their* numbers and importance (north Albanian genealogies, for example, invariably mention their Rascian, Serb origin; Croats have, with Austro-Hungarian help, Croatized large segments of Dalmatian and Herzegovinian Serbs; Magyars have Magyarized Voivodina Serbs; Muslims still bear their Serb ancestors' surnames; Macedonians have only decades ago, by Tito government edict, Bulgarized *their* Serb family names, etc.), but all this might change: never, since Ottoman times, have the Serbs been so backed up to a wall, and they don't like it one whit.

In 1922, Lloyd George suggested that Serbian troops take Constantinople, as a move against Mustafa Atatürk. Then, Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pasic declined, saying that the Serb's 1912 victory over the Turks at Kumanovo in Macedonia was ample revenge for the 1389 Kosovo defeat. Now, however, judging by the mood of the Serb fighters I have seen on the various battlegrounds of the latest pan-Serb War for Survival, our enemies—and their protectors and tutors—might come to rue the day when Serb contemplativeness and leisure of spirit were mistaken for weakness and servility.

Kraina Serbs—part of the great Dinaric Serb population—are, according to anthropological, ethnological, and historical evidence, as Welsh (Vlach) as the men of the hills around Cardiff. The Dinaric Alps population has not—physically, mentally, or otherwise—changed much from the time of the legend of the dragon-spawned warriors of Cadmus. Montenegrin and Herzegovinian Serbs are still the tallest and the toughest people of Europe, and among the foremost military nations of the world. Their Slavic (i.e., Serb) overcoat only complements their great Celtic Voloch core: the Highland Fling is a Montenegrin dance as well, the bagpipes a Dalmatian Serb instrument too, heroic folk poetry singing of border feuds and cattle raids their staff of life still, all in a region boasting such place names as Tara (a mountain and a river), Boan (a town named after BoAn, the Celtic goddess of waters), Bojana River (from the Boyne), Bribir, Skradin, Krk, Kupa, and others. Called the Mauro Vlachs by the Byzantines and the Venetians, or just (contemptuously) Vlachs by the Croats and the Muslims, the Morlochs of Kraina so mesmerized H.G. Wells that he named a future race of cannibalistic troglodytes after them. This reputation the Kraina Serbs certainly did not deserve: H.G. Wells's unwed wife Rebecca West correctly saw the historical, maligned Uskoks as victims of the Great Powers' machinations, much as today.

A measure of the Serb spirit may be gathered from the fact that the Balkan Volochs chose to become Serb, instead of Croat or Muslim. Among the Slavs—and their ancient Iranian aristocracy (the original Serbs of Pliny)—they saw a kindred, aristocratic people, interested in honor much more than profit. The free herders of the *carst* thus turned Serb, while the Romance population of the coastal towns became both Croat and Serb: Croat for those who found conso-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lation in belonging to the Universal Church and a Universal Empire and Serb for those who rejoiced in being just as God had created them.

The few Volochs—and many more Slavs—who accepted Islam sought, in all probability, merely a respite from the impalements, the beheadings, the house and village burnings, the eternal rapes and pillages that marked Ottoman rule. Turkic terror, refined over the millennia, has sometimes mistakenly impressed even American servicemen, who have interpreted it as a sign of military valor, not of what it really signified—an Oriental desperation, desponding of any sense to life, except for the mad, heedless dash toward might, glory, and power.

To search for a regional, even a European, solution to the Balkans' ethnic, religious, and other conflicts, without taking into account their genesis, and their historical justice, is insane. Only a Doomsday "International Community," run by people unwilling to concede that "bygones" are an inescapable part of the "present" as well as of the "future," could have committed such an array of sins and crimes as inform the present Western policy toward Yugoslavia.

Moreover, to seek solutions that ride roughshod over Serb national interests—as the West does today—is to court at least failure, if not outright disaster. (The Austrians, among others, tried that twice—in World War I and II.) For any calculations about "containing" the Serbs by using their ancient enemies—the Austrian Germans, the Hungarians, the Croats, the renegade Muslims, the Bulgarians, the Turks, and the Albanians—are a tally without the final word of the innkeeper—in this case, the Serb nation.

What should the Serbs be "contained" from? Is it from reaching their just goal of living in a single state that ensures their biological survival, as the so readily destroyed Yugoslavia used to be? The "International Community" (a euphemism, mostly, for Germany) has given the Croats a state that includes a million Serbs—a quarter of Croatia's population—within borders arbitrarily drawn by Tito, while "Bosnians" (only the Roman Catholics and the Muslims) are awarded "sovereignty" over an additional million-and-a-half Serbs—close to 40 percent of that state's inhabitants. Yet Serbs are not allowed to have what they have already achieved, by their military valor and long-term sacrifice, through two internationally recognized former Yugoslavias. If the hodgepodge of Bosnia can exist as a viable "state," then, compared to that, a Yugoslavia, any Yugoslavia, is a unified nation. Even the much-maligned "Greater" Serbia would be less multinational, less multiconfessional, less multicultural, than the chaotic Bosnia and Herzegovina of the Champion of Islam, Alija Izetbegovic.

In a sense, Serbs should be eternally grateful to the Croat autocrat, Franjo Tudjman, and to the Slovene demagogue, Milan Kucan—both former top Tito cadres and communist officials of the highest rank—for awakening the Serbs' nationalism and reinforcing their will to survive. Had not this madness come about, in all likelihood Serb liberal intellectuals and the Serb effete, communist-bred elite, would have emasculated the Serb national spirit, in keeping with the best intentions of the architects of the New World Order. The Serbs, then, would have become just a regional designation, much the same as the Scots, who have ended up a mere name for the inhabitants of a country once as Celtic as Serb Kraina.

The Germans, who call all the Romance peoples "Welsh," and the Russians, who so call the Poles, settlers of the original European Celtic homeland, certainly know who the Voloch (*Volcae*) were. As in the case of the Serbs—the hated Wends of their genocidal past—they would that there were no history, or, at least, that they could rewrite it, more to their present democratic, human-rights-concerned liking.

What the Americans could do is to start thinking at least a few years ahead, instead of jerking their knees according to the political dictates of the moment. Though the world is governed by interest, Americans should strive toward a perception of *enlightened self-interest*, usually called friendship, among the more traditional peoples and men. Perhaps the reasons that made, say, the French become historic friends of the Americans—as the Serbs and the Greeks are their friends in the Balkans—will again reassert themselves, for the cause of mutual survival. In the cacophony of liberal babble, of endless and proliferating "rights," false "issues," and interchangeable media crusades (as unjust as they are foolish, unworthy, and forgettable) friends in certain-to-come need might prove to be a scarce commodity. To search for such "friends" among historically anti-American and anti-Western nations like the Bosnian Muslims, the Muslim Albanians, the Teuton-loving Croats, and the autistic Magyars, not to mention the Oriental Bulgars, is truly a puzzling decision. For war there shall be as long as there are men, and wise nations and people keep that in mind when laying the groundwork for their national well-being, not to say survival.

In Kraina, among the men who love to joke, gamble, sing, fight, or just gab a little, the knowledge of what is and what is not is precise, certain, and well-worn. The Kraina Serbs can hear American cargo planes flying over their stone hamlets, on their way to drop "humanitarian aid" to their ancient foes, the "Turks" of Bosnia. Ljubo Urukalo, a dark-eyed, white-toothed young soldier, whose uncle the present-day Croat Ustashi have cut up into six pieces (the dead man was buried where he was found, so his mother would never learn of how he died), has a one-year-old son. Urukalo's son is a tiny, dark-eyed baby, crawling over a tended green lawn, in a small village on the *carst*-plateau. Among them, I smile and feel like a human being: no one asks anything of me, except my presence and my good spirits.

That, it seems, I have given them as an armed volunteer from Serbia. I sit in the enclosed yard and drink brandy with the Frontiersmen, a potent, clear liquid, akin to the Italian *grappa*. We finger our rifles—everyone carries one, the young and the old, many women as well—and watch the western sky, where the Croat coastal batteries sound off, pounding our villages, our women, and our children.

It will be a long war, because someone in Belgrade has forgotten that Serbs are a warrior people, not a nation of merchants—or negotiators—like the compatriots of Vance and Owen. After all, what is there to negotiate if someone wants to do us in? Let him come and get us, we won't mind, providing he's willing to pay the price. So far, no one in this world has been rich enough—in men, money, and hate—to win out over us, no matter how fervent his desire.

Momcilo Selic is a writer and journalist living in Belgrade. He was imprisoned by the communist government in Yugoslavia for satirizing the cult of the leader. He was managing editor of Chronicles *from 1987 to 1989.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letter From New York City

by Herbert I. London

Life as Pathology

The tumultuous events at the *New York Post* over the last few months serve as a perfect metaphor for New York. This oldest daily in the United States, established by Alexander Hamilton, is (as I write) fighting for its life amid courtroom recriminations over its ownership and purported losses of $1.5 million a week. When the peculiar and volatile Abe Hirschfeld was granted ownership of the tabloid, he announced that Bill Tatum, owner of the *Amsterdam News* and well-known race-baiter, would be the paper's editor. This decision, along with rather bizarre public comments from Hirschfeld ("The *Post* will make me G-d") and the wholesale firing of many of the newspaper's stalwarts, led to an open rebellion by its staff. Despite their unemployment, many of the newspaper's employees continued to turn out the paper, excoriating Hirschfeld and Tatum in the process. It could easily be postulated that only in New York could such a zany set of conditions evolve.

New York was described as late as the early 1960's by Jan Morris, historian of cities in the throes of deterioration, as the center of international culture, a communications mecca, a place electric with opportunity. Since then, however, its slide has been perceptible. New York is not what it was and may never even be what it is. Recently Mayor Dinkins called a press conference to congratulate himself and his administration on a reduction in homicides from more than 2,000 annually to 1,900. This announcement was used to show that New York is on the "road to recovery."

Yet when Brian Watkins, a young tennis enthusiast, came to New York for the U.S. Open, he became one of the city's many casualties, brutally killed while defending his mother who was being attacked by muggers in the subway system. The day after this incident, Mayor Dinkins went to Washington to testify for tighter gun-control laws. But Brian Watkins was killed with a knife. When a known drug-dealer was killed in an altercation with cops, the mayor used taxpayer money to have the drug-dealer's family travel from the Caribbean to New York for the funeral. When thugs boycotted a Korean-owned grocery in Flatbush, the mayor told police to ignore a court ordinance restricting the boycotters from the entrance to the store. He described the episode as "a community disturbance." When the Lubavitcher community in Crown Heights was attacked by ruffians after the accidental death of a 10-year-old child, police were restrained from converting a violent one-sided episode into a race riot. However, after Yankel Rosenbaum was killed in retaliation for the death of Gavin Cato (the 10-year-old killed in the accident) the mayor did not consider it appropriate to attend the Rosenbaum funeral service. So much for evenhandedness.

The consequence of such actions and inaction has been the conversion of this city into a racial tinderbox. Yet it isn't only race that divides the city. When Joseph Fernandez, former chancellor of its school system, insisted on imposing a "Children of the Rainbow" curriculum that in part promotes tolerance for homosexual activity, several local school districts balked. One of them, District 24 in Queens, led by 72-year-old grandmother Mary Cummins, fought tenaciously until Fernandez was ousted by a majority of the Board of Education and compliance with the curriculum proposal was made voluntary. The mayor supported Fernandez throughout this incident and lobbied vigorously for his retention as chancellor.

Similarly, the mayor fought relentlessly against the Ancient Order of Hibernians so that homosexuals could march in the St. Patrick's Day parade and carry signs declaring their sexual orientation. When the courts ruled against the mayor and the homosexual demonstration was declared off-limits, Dinkins, along with Governor Cuomo and President of the City Council Andy Stein, did not march in the parade—an event known as much for political participation as for demonstrations of respect for the sons and daughters of Erin.

Yes, events surrounding the *Post* are a mere microcosm of a city wracked by culture, race, and class warfare. The New York public schools, once the envy of the world, have been converted into a literal and figurative battlefield. One school on the west side of Manhattan, Park West High School, collected more than a thousand weapons after a metal detector was installed at the beginning of the 1992 school year. And since Fernandez urged the distribution of condoms in the public school system as a preventive for AIDS, despite parental objection, classes have been organized to promote their "proper" use. It is hardly an exaggeration in this city to contend that students might spend more time putting condoms on cucumbers than on solving quadratic equations.

At the moment there are 540 municipal employees in the city work force for every 10,000 people in the city. That ratio doesn't mean very much until it is compared to the second highest such ratio among American cities. Detroit has 206 municipal workers for every 10,000 in the population. New York is by any measure the last and most entrenched bastion of socialism in the world. There are more school administrators (5,400) at 110 Livingston Street, the nerve center of the city's school system, than there are from Portugal to the Ural Mountains.

The size and scope of the city work force explain in large part why nothing works in the city. Recently I was asked to appear on a television program at WNYC, located on the 31st floor of the municipal building. When I arrived there I was told that the main elevator goes to the 28th floor and another elevator to the 31st. This was well and good, except that I couldn't find the second elevator. I proceeded to knock on a door where I was greeted by a twinkie-eating city worker. "Waddaya want?" he asked. "I'm looking for the elevator to the 31st floor," I responded. "Yeah, so is everyone else. Just get in line and I'll let you know where it is." Incredulous, I asked why I had to wait in line when all I wanted to know was where the elevator is located. Somewhat irritated, he said, "I'm just doin' my job. This is what my supervisor told me to do." Alas, here is socialism New York style. Mere civility is now forced into the cauldron of city politics.

There are 1.1 million people on welfare in New York City; 300,000 people work for the city government; and one out of every seven New Yorkers resides in a rent-controlled or rent-stabilized apartment. Moreover, private-sector jobs are declining, with the city losing 375,000 since 1989, or more than 25 percent of the nation's total. The net departure rate from New York is more than 120,000 since the decade began, and if the price of one-bedroom condos ever

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rises to 1980's levels, young couples eager to leave New York will lead a mass exodus. Needless to say, those leaving the city do not include the poor, indigent, and homeless.

There are 80,000 "homeless" people on the streets, most of them in Manhattan and most deinstitutionalized in the 1980's. In 1980 there were 93,000 mental patients in New York City; today there are 11,000. These so-called homeless live in the alcoves of retail shops and in the subway system, turning a once unique transportation system into an open urinal. Yet the civil libertarians have made it virtually impossible to return the streets and the subway to sane, law-abiding citizens. Beggars, carrying empty coffee cups, are ubiquitous in New York. There is scarcely a street one can walk on without being accosted for money. And to the astonishment of almost every sensible citizen, Judge Sand ruled that begging can't be prohibited since it is a form of expression protected by the First Amendment. The decision was overturned, but it nevertheless suggests a great deal about the city's ideological pathology.

The streets of New York are now filled with foreigners, both legal and illegal, selling watches that are knock-offs of Rolexes and shirts that say Fendi on them and speaking Pidgin English. There isn't any obligation for these people to learn English since New York practices bilingualism (read multiculturalism) in the schools and every other institution. Moreover, the local office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service has virtually given up trying to control the situation. How else can one explain the public role that Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman had in New York's Muslim community, even though he was regarded as a terrorist in Egypt and forced to leave that country? In New York anything goes, even a terrorist preaching violence to fellow church members, some of whom blew up one tower of the World Trade Center.

The city's budget is $30 billion, or the 14th largest in the world. Much of this money comes from commercial taxes. Yet many buildings in New York have a real value—based on occupancy rates—of zero. To make sure this financial house of cards doesn't collapse, city authorities perpetuate the myth that commercial properties have the same value today as in the 70's. Of course no one believes that, but city authorities won't tell the truth, and building owners, fearful of losing property that they hope will one day appreciate, keep their mouths shut.

Into this maelstrom of madness add a variety of political candidates who claim they can solve the apparently insolvable. Mayor Dinkins will run again in large part because the demographics are moving in his direction. Blacks are a rapidly growing portion of the city's population, and they tend to vote as a bloc. No other candidate can count on 30 percent of the vote as he can. He also has to defend a record that includes a potential financial catastrophe, race hatred, and a school system that is falling apart.

His major rival is Rudy Giuliani, who lost to Dinkins by two percentage points in 1989. Giuliani is the Republican hopeful who is to present city politics what John Lindsay was to the 1960's. The word "conservative" he describes as ideological, and his political philosophy he calls pragmatic. He has variously described the Children of the Rainbow curriculum as acceptable if it incorporates certain changes ("the words 'artificial insemination' should be removed"), as unacceptable because it is age inappropriate, as a good idea because it promotes tolerance, and as a bad idea because it is silly to teach such issues to first-graders. As I see it, either Giuliani is confused or he is trying to be all things to all people. The one thing, perhaps the only thing, he is clear about is his desire to win.

Then there are Andy Stein, president of the City Council and a wealthy man; Herman Badillo, a member of the City University Board of Trustees, a former mayoral candidate, and not a very wealthy man; and Roy Innis, executive director of the Congress of Racial Equality. None of these men can defeat Dinkins in a Democratic primary, as recent polls suggest. But that will not deter any of them. In fact, Stein may end up on the ballot as the Liberal Party candidate, a scenario I regard as very plausible. Last is George Marlin, the editor of the G.K. Chesterton papers and a Wall Street banker who is likely to run as the Conservative Party candidate and who is the darling of the Mary Cummins set, meaning the white ethnics fed up with the Children of the Rainbow curriculum and other elitist ideas.

With this line-up what is a conservative to do? In the best of all worlds, my candidate is Marlin, even though he probably will not garner ten percent of the vote. But New York is most certainly not the best of all possible worlds. In a four-way race involving Dinkins, Stein, Giuliani, and Marlin, every vote for Marlin is, in effect, a vote for Dinkins. The Marlin constituency will be composed of white ethnics who—if no real choice were available—would vote for Rudy Giuliani. Should Marlin get six or seven percent of the vote, it most certainly will represent the margin of victory for David Dinkins.

Since I want to see a Republican Party built on Reagan principles instead of liberal Republican pabulum, a Giuliani victory gives me pause. On the other hand, four more years of Dinkins playing the race card with a vengeance will mark the end of an era for New York and possibly an irreversible slide. Does a conservative, therefore, vote his principles or does he vote to oust Dinkins? Does he vote for the future of New York or does he vote for the millennia? This has been a far more gut-wrenching decision than readers might assume since the change, should Giuliani win, will be marginal in any case. Giuliani most likely will appease the homosexual lobby as Dinkins has, and he will not consider a voucher plan for the schools, a position Dinkins shares. Yet Giuliani would probably root out the corruption in Dinkins' Democratic administration, and he will mitigate the race war the mayor has promoted.

Yet I can't help but consider the long-term effect of a Republican mayor who espouses the liberal social line, especially when liberals assume these are the positions Republicans should advocate. Indeed, what happens to the Republican Party when its leaders are William Weld and Rudy Giuliani? Will genuinely conservative Republicans be forced out of Lincoln's party creating a marginalized third party or will they be forced into the background of a party that stands for low taxes and low morals? Surely these questions won't be answered by the mayoral election in New York City. But they are unavoidable in the New York context.

Aside from lamenting, I'm not sure what I will do in this election. I love New York for many nostalgic reasons, and I also love my principles. Should I compromise my principles to give New York a chance? Fortunately, I've got a few months before I decide. Unfortunately, I don't know whether the *New York Post*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or New York City can survive the next few months. These decisions rest with an authority much higher than the mayor of New York.

Herbert I. London is John M. Olin Professor of Humanities at New York University and was the Conservative Party candidate for governor of New York in 1990.

Letter From the Lower Right

John Shelton Reed

The Mississippi Hippies and Other Denizens of the Deep (South)

◆

January in Jackson—well, it wasn't April in Paris, but it had its pleasures, among them the chance to compare the Magnolia State to the more northerly South I know better. I was lecturing at Millsaps College, staying in a nearby motel with a view from my window of the quaint little observatory that figures in the delightful, made-in-Jackson movie *Miss Firecracker*. Millsaps is a small college with a good faculty, so its students may get worked a little harder than average, but campus life seems to be pretty much standard-issue Southern collegiate: "Inez-burgers" and beer at the student hangout, "mean-badboogie" by a group called the Mississippi Hippies, and so forth. The only thing that struck me as odd about Millsaps was its emphasis on security: the college is a heavily patrolled, fenced compound with only two entrances, both guarded after 6:00 P.M. Turns out there's a reason for that.

As the state capital, Jackson has picked up some of the accoutrements of yuppiedom—fern bars, fitness centers, even a bookstore good enough to stock my books. But these amenities coexist with concentrated poverty of a sort that you've got to get pretty far off the Interstates to find in North Carolina these days. Jackson's the first place outside the Third World, for instance, where I've seen cigarettes routinely sold one at a time. Within sight of its downtown office buildings are blocks of squalid shotgun houses adjoining old Farrish Street. Now that the black middle class has moved to the outskirts of town and patronizes the same malls as everyone else, the once-vibrant commercial district of Negro Jackson has become a shuttered, graffiti-scarred wasteland. Take this residual poverty, add the crack scourge amply documented on local television news shows, stir in some pockets of relative affluence like Millsaps, and you've got the ingredients for a serious crime problem. Razor wire sales are obviously booming, and burglar alarm systems and private security patrols seem to be increasingly ordinary expenses of middle-class life. Of course, Jackson's not unique in this respect (we had a drive-by shooting a half-block from my house in Chapel Hill last April), it's just that the contrasts are starker than I'm used to.

Most of the city's problems, including this one, are tied in one way or another with race, so it should be said on the city's behalf that relations between black and white folk strike a visitor as relatively amicable. My racial animosity sensors are in pretty good working order and I've detected more —both ways—in some single days in New York City than in a whole month in Jackson, 1993. Black and white Jacksonians alike were uniformly civil and usually more than that to me and, as far as I could see, to each other. A very important contributing factor has to be that the spokesmen for the black community (at least the ones I encountered) are serious, sober, and constructive.

One Jackson image that will stick with me is that of a disconcerting "ghost mall" not far from the college, abandoned when the surrounding residential districts changed their demographic complexion. Next to it was a billboard offering the Virgin Mary's 800 number in Bayside, Queens. (For some reason, the poorer sections of Jackson were blanketed with these signs. The local Catholic bishop took to the pages of the *Clarion-Ledger* to deny any connection between his diocese and this enterprise.) Across the street, in a security-gated hole-in-the-wall, you can find Tony's Tamales, which I recommend. Tamales have long been traditional fare for black Mississippians, although no one has ever been able to tell me why.

Tamales aside, I figured culinary Jackson would be typically Southern: a meat and three vegetable plate-lunch town with an overlay of all-American fast food and a few pretentious expense-account joints where waiters tote big pepper mills. I don't have to go to Mississippi for any of that, so I figured I'd eat Special K for a month, save some money, and lose the weight I gained over Christmas. But I underestimated both the hospitality of Jacksonians and the quality of the restaurants they'd take me to.

Jackson does have good country cooking (try the restaurant at the Farmers' Market). Midway between Memphis and New Orleans, it also has good ribs and passable muffeletas. But my favorite restaurant—and not just because I went there with Eudora Welty—has a sign out front that says "Bill's Burgers, God Bless America." In typical Mississippi fashion, its owner isn't named Bill and its specialty is seafood. Jackson's proximity to the Gulf means it has at least a half-dozen fine fish places, most of them run by Greeks like "Bill." The Mayflower is another, downtown near the capitol; a Jackson fixture for decades, it is run by a couple from Patmos.

One weekend I took a leisurely drive up through the Delta to Memphis. This rich bottomland between the Yazoo and Mississippi rivers is the subject of my friend Jim Cobb's fine new book, *The Most Southern Place on Earth*, and by some criteria it may be that. Certainly it offers the largest concentration of rural black poverty in the United States, as it has for over a hundred years, and the recent introduction of large-scale commercial catfish farming hasn't done much to change that. I once made fun of V.S. Naipaul's book on the South for overusing the "one could have been in" gimmick, but with the semitropical landscape flat to the misty horizon, the ramshackle recycling of building materials, the gormless decoration with primary colors—well, one could have been in Nigeria.

The Delta has been fertile in so many ways. Even its place names are rich in associations, few of them happy, and it has exported its children by the scores of thousands. My route took me first to Yazoo City, home of Willie Morris and Jerry Clower and lately both Clinton's Secretary of Agriculture and the new chairman of the Republican National Committee. On to Indianola, home of B.B. King and the White Citizens Council. Past Parchman, the notorious state prison immortalized in a Mose Allison lyric ("Sittin' over here on Parchman Farm / I never did no man no harm /

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gonna be here the rest of my life / And all I did was shoot my wife"). To Clarksdale, home of the Delta Blues Museum, and beyond, past Graceland, into Memphis.

For the last part of the trip I was on old Highway 61, the way out to the north for countless black Mississippians and a good many white ones, too. Bill Ferris, director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, has named his Saturday night public-radio blues program for this road. The Blues Doctor gets a lot of requests from Parchman.

Back in Jackson, one Sunday morning I went over to the state Agricultural and Forestry Museum, where stands a reconstructed Mississippi village of *circa* 1920, differing from a good many hamlets still dotting the Southern countryside mostly by being tidier. In the old, unheated, white frame country church a small Anglican congregation gathers, to worship by the Old Prayer Book. About 20 of us were there that morning, and I listened with pleasure to a sermon on the ideal of the gentleman, as suggested by St. Paul in Romans 12:7. After Communion, we adjourned to the old Masonic hall for coffee.

Another Sabbath found me at a very different service, at Jackson's First Presbyterian Church, where I went with my friends Douglas and Caroline, he a seminary professor, a proud Scot from North Carolina, she a high-school Latin teacher, the daughter of a Cambridge don, both of them *Chronicles* readers. Jackson is Baptist and Methodist country, but "First Pres" has several thousand members, a good proportion of them present that Sunday. The church has missionaries at work in the Delta, in Prague and Bratislava and the Ukraine, in London (among Muslims), and even in New York City, the very belly of the beast. The service we attended was videotaped for satellite broadcast to Canada. (Douglas and Caroline's son was one of the cameramen.)

That evening I watched another televised ritual, a broadcast taped at the local "cowboy" club, Rodeo's, which draws even better than the Presbyterian church. Fifteen hundred dancing white people would be a scary sight under the best of circumstances, but when they're engaged in semi-aerobic boot-scootin' line dances with names like the Electric Slide and the Tush Push—well, I don't know. I confess that I've been to the Longbranch in Raleigh. I've even done the two-step there. But I've never seen the likes of this. All I have to say is: I don't think Hank done it this-a-way.

So many other impressions:

—An informative sociological tour of Jackson with a retired businessman who studied with Howard Odum and Rupert Vance at North Carolina in the 1930's and wrote his master's thesis on sharecropping. I was reminded of Chapel Hill's great and beneficent influence in those days, when the South's problems seemed to be simpler.

—The good little museum in the Old Capitol building, with its evenhanded treatment of the state's often troubled past. On one of the building's splendid curving staircases, a stunning blonde in a bridal dress was being photographed.

—A Kappa Alpha "convivium," where my friend Douglas, in a dinner jacket and the tartan of his clan, spoke on Robert E. Lee as a Christian gentleman. The Knights and their ladies concluded the evening with the traditional toast to the General, the "spiritual founder" of their Order, in pure water.

—A visit to Tougaloo College, a small black institution with a distinguished history through the civil rights movement, now sadly down at the heels, scrambling for federal funds, and seeking some coherent mission in the wake of that movement's success.

—A conference at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, where our tweedy group joined several hundred drunken undergraduates to hear a Memphis retro band called the Bouffants. Halfway through "Chain of Fools," C. Vann Woodward of Arkansas and Yale, the dean of Southern historians, leaned over and shouted, "They're not bad."

All in all, I returned to North Carolina better informed, if not wiser. Yes, Mississippi is different from the upper South, but mostly just in the same ways that the upper South differs from, say, Massachusetts. The people are even friendlier, the Protestant churches are even more conspicuous, the homicide rate is even higher, the food has even more cholesterol, and so forth. Some of the differences are big, but not many are qualitative. Except perhaps in the Delta, I felt—in some primal sense—at home in Mississippi. W. J. Cash wrote 50 years ago that, "If it can be said that there are many Souths, the fact remains that there is also one South." He was right about that.

John Shelton Reed usually writes from Chapel Hill, where he teaches at the University of North Carolina.

To a Saxon Poet

by Jorge Luis Borges
Translated by Robert Mezey

Snow fallen on Northumberland has known
And forgotten every footprint that you made,
And numberless the sunsets that have greyed,
My unknown brother, between your hour and mine.
Slowly, in slow shade, you forged laborious
Metaphors of swordblades in the seas,
Of living horror hidden in the forest,
And of the solitude that dogs our days.
Where can I find your deeds, your name, your birth?
They all are long sealed in oblivion.
I'll never know you as you must have been
When you were a man like me and walked the earth.
Lone exile was the road you trudged along.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

A Letter to Senator John Kerry

by John Lofton

Sex and Soldiering

My, how time flies, sir. It seems like only yesterday (it was in late November 1991, actually) that you were apologizing after being caught telling a so-called gay-bashing anti-lesbian joke to Jerry Brown. You remember, the one that was inadvertently picked up by a C-Span microphone. I thought that what was wrong with the joke was that it wasn't all that funny, really. But, hey, that's history. And, obviously, you've reformed. I know this because I saw you on the NBC *Today* show (January 28, 1993) fighting for the "right" of "gays" to serve legally in our military. In fact, I saw you saying, flatly: "We should not have a policy that discriminates and kicks people out because of their sexual orientation."

Gays? Now, there's a once-fine word that has been corrupted, has it not? Your average homosexual is anything but *gay*, anything but full of mirth and lightheartedness. These folks are full of rage and hate. They ought to be called "glums" or "grims"—anything but "gay."

But I wonder, senator: Do you *really* believe that people with *any* kind of sexual "orientation" ought legally to be in our Armed Forces? I ask you this, sir, because I've been reading a little bit in *The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy* (one of the standard and best-known medical texts), the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III), and the admittedly less well-known *Encyclopedia of Aberrations: A Psychiatric Handbook*, published by the Philosophical Library. After reviewing the—what shall I call it?—interesting smorgasbord of sexual "orientations" in these books, I think the case can be made that we should try to exclude *more* people from our military on the basis of their sexual "orientations." I know. I know. You're probably saying, "No way! That would be crazy, bigoted, intolerant," all that. But hear me out, please.

For openers, the DSM-III, in a section titled "Psychosexual Disorders," informs us that there are four groups of such disorders: "Gender Disability Disorders," which are "characterized by a person's feelings of discomfort and inappropriateness about his or her anatomic sex and by persistent behaviors generally associated with the other sex"; "Paraphilias," which are "characterized by arousal in response to sexual objects or situations that are not part of normative arousal-activity patterns and that in varying degrees may interfere with the capacity for reciprocal affectionate sexual activity"; "Psychosexual Dysfunctions," which are "characterized by inhibitions in sexual desire or the psychophysiological changes that characterize the sexual response cycle"; and "Other Psychosexual Disorders," which come in two categories—"Ego-dystonic Homosexuality" and a residual category known as "Psychosexual Disorders Not Elsewhere Classified."

So what *exactly* are we talking about here, senator? Well, for example, we have the "orientation" known as transsexualism—a "heterogeneous disorder" where a person, to put it mildly, doesn't like what sex he/she is and "persistently wishes to be rid of one's genitals and live as a member of the other sex." This "discomfort," we are told, frequently leads to cross-dressing, that is dressing in clothes of the opposite sex—a form of fashion Pat Buchanan alerted us to in his speech before the Republican Convention.

Now, I don't want to appear close-minded here. Because it's true that with hormonal treatment and electrolysis some male cross-dressers *can* be rendered indistinguishable from members of the opposite sex they are impersonating. And I never had the honor of being in the military. I didn't even go to college. But it does seem to me that having a transsexual in our Armed Forces *could* be a problem.

Speaking just for myself, one red-blooded American heterosexual married man with three grown children and three small grandsons, I know that if I was a young man in the military today, I would find it very disconcerting to be bunking and showering with a guy perpetually dissatisfied with his own genitals, a man who might, just *might*, take matters into his own hands and try to alter his plumbing. At the very least, I would find it potentially disruptive in my unit to see a transsexual, or several transsexuals, reporting for duty in dresses—particularly if one of these individuals was my commanding officer.

In addition, at future Tailhook conventions, and at similar get-togethers, it could be potentially traumatic to have male members of our Armed Forces sexually harassing individuals they honestly thought were women only to find out that these persons were men. Also, such transsexuals, undetected, under current affirmative action programs, might be unfairly promoted over men, even though they are, in fact, men.

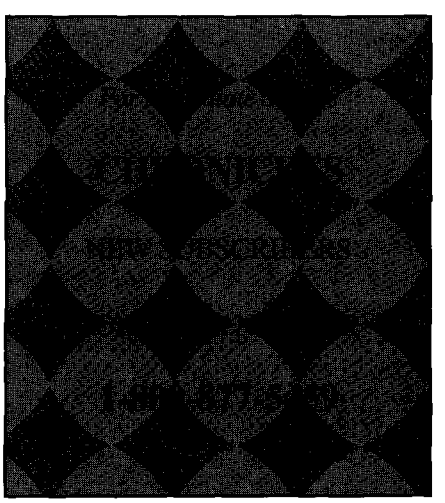
Though I am not an expert, it would, again, appear that there might be problems in our Armed Forces with paraphiliacs—those who require unusual and bizarre imagery or acts for sexual excitement. These generally involve: one, use of a nonhuman object for sexual arousal; two, repetitive sexual activity with humans involving real or simulated suffering or humiliation; or three, repetitive sexual activity with nonconsenting partners. The specific paraphilias described in the DSM-III are: fetishism, transvestism, zoophilia, pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual masochism, and sexual sadism.

So what *exactly* are these sexual "ori-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

entations"? Well, I didn't know either before I read these books. Fetishism is a preference for achieving sexual excitement by using things like articles of clothing (such as women's underwear, shoes, and boots) and, more rarely, parts of the human body (such as hair or nails). Transvestism is recurrent and persistent cross-dressing in women's clothes by males for sexual excitement—interference with which, we are told, results in "intense frustration." The essential feature of zoophilia is the use of animals to achieve sexual excitement, usually an animal one had contact with as a child, "such as a household pet or farm animal." Pedophilia is the act or fantasy of engaging in sexual activity with prepubertal children. Exhibitionism is repetitive exposure of the genitals to an unsuspecting stranger to achieve sexual excitement—the purpose being to surprise or shock. Voyeurism is repetitive looking at unsuspecting people, usually strangers, who are either naked, in the act of disrobing, or engaging in sexual activity, to, again, achieve sexual excitement. Sexual masochism is sexual excitement produced in an individual by his or her own suffering—such as being humiliated, bound, raped, self-mutilated, or beaten. And sexual sadism is the infliction of physical or psychological suffering (sometimes including death) on another person to achieve sexual excitement.

In addition, there is a category of sexual "orientations" known as "atypical paraphilia," which include: coprophilia (feces); frotteurism (rubbing); klismaphilia (enema); mysophilia (filth); necrophilia (corpse); telephone scatologia (lewdness); and urophilia (urine). Now, again, at the risk of appearing to be some kind of "phobe," senator, I would, nevertheless, respectfully urge you to consider whether having individuals with such sexual "orientations" in our military, legally and openly, might possibly create some problems.



Fetishists? There are now a lot of women in the military who wear underwear and boots, and who have nails and hair. The danger here is obvious. Transvestites? Ditto, another obvious danger made even more real by fetishists. Put a fetishist in a fox hole with a cross-dressing transvestite and—presto!—he could immediately be attracted to the underwear, boots, nails, and hair of his buddy, who he would naturally think is a woman. The nightmare scenario would, of course, be a cross-dressing, transvestite fetishist who would become obsessed with his *own* underwear, boots, nails, and hair. If this individual was a commanding officer, an entire unit could be paralyzed—with the result being a mission in serious trouble.

Zoophiliacs? More trouble. Your unit is pinned down in a rural area, temporarily occupying a farm. There are many animals on this farm, which some of the zoophiliacs among you had as childhood pets. Use your imagination, senator. It wouldn't be pretty. Pedophiles? *Big* trouble. Your unit enters a town in, say, Somalia. As always, numerous young children mob your unit to greet the troops. The pedophiles among you start fantasizing or acting on their fantasies. Either way, as I say, *big* trouble. Screaming kids. Outraged parents. Uncle Sam's good name is besmirched around the world.

Exhibitionists? Your unit is in a town to, among other things, create some good will among the local populace without which you cannot successfully conduct your operation. Suddenly, an out-of-the-closet, now-legally-in-the-military exhibitionist is mooning a group of local citizens, or worse. This would not be good. Voyeurs? Many military bases have on-base housing for married couples. With voyeurism now legal, there would be an epidemic of peeping tomism, without a doubt. The "right to privacy" would be abolished. The Constitution would be a dead letter. Sexual masochists? Sexual sadists? Allow them legally to be in our Armed Forces, and out of the closet, and the barracks will look like your typical leather bar or bath house in San Francisco on a busy weekend. Coprophiliacs? A visit to your average military rest room would be unbelievably disgusting and *very* unhealthy. Frotteurists? Men and women "rubbing" one another for sexual thrills? No way. Chaos. Klismaphiliacs? Enemas that sexually excite? The infirmary would be a most dangerous place to visit. Mysophiliacs? Filth for sexual gratification? *Filthy*, indeed! Necrophiliacs? Sex with *dead* people? The battlefield would be exceptionally nauseating. Telephone scatologics? Increasing numbers of personnel would refuse to answer their telephones, both in the office and in the field. Communications would be totally disrupted. Urophiliacs? Out of the question.

And there are, alas, many, many more such sexual "orientations," senator. *Lots more, sir*—such questionable practices as: "nymphomania," women who choose to have sex with many partners; "contrectation," the impulse to touch members of the opposite sex indiscriminately (some senators seem to suffer from this "orientation"); "pyromania," the setting of fires for sexual kicks; "zoosadism," cruelty to animals for sexual satisfaction; "nympholepsy," a trance-like state induced by erotic daydreams; and, last and certainly least, "osphresiophilia," where certain odors sexually excite the sniffer. But I know you're a busy man, so I won't go into detail about the potential hazards of allowing such alternative sexual lifestyle "orientations," legally and openly, in our military.

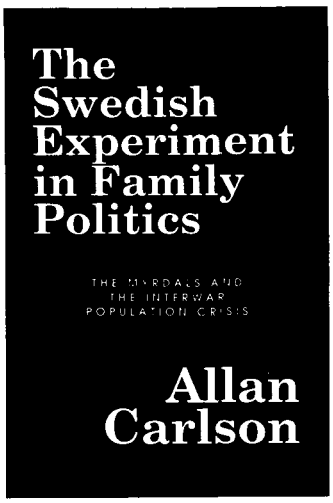
In conclusion, senator, I would urge you to please reconsider your view concerning our military that "we should not have a policy that discriminates and kicks people out because of their sexual orientation." If, however, you continue to stand by your *Today* show statement, and see nothing wrong with the aforementioned "orientations," believing that such individuals can serve in our Armed Forces with no degradation of the efficiency of these forces, then I would say, sir—as a layman—that you would appear to be performing what the *Encyclopedia of Aberrations* calls a "schizoid maneuver," which is defined as: "The mental distortion of an unpalatable reality, external or internal, into something more acceptable to the individual."

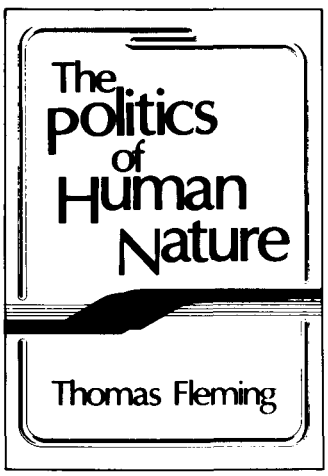
John Lofton is editor and publisher of "The Lofton Letter," a monthly newsletter that looks at life from an orthodox Christian perspective.

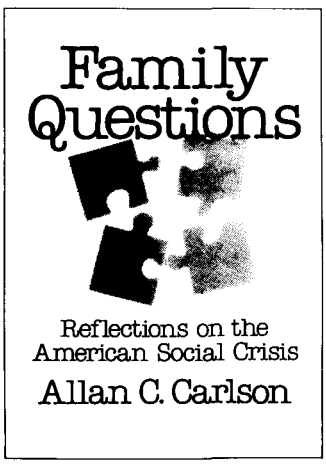
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

transaction

New and Recent Books on Family and Policy







THE SWEDISH EXPERIMENT IN FAMILY POLITICS

THE MYRDALS AND THE INTERWAR POPULATION CRISIS

Allan Carlson

This devastating account of the work of Gunnar and Alva Myrdal portrays how two young scholars used the power of ideas to help engineer a new domestic order in Sweden. It offers the general reader remarkable insight into the nature of Scandinavian social life, and the specialist a critical perspective on how social science can itself become the problem, rather than providing solutions in contemporary post-industrial life.

ISBN: 0-88738-299-1 (cloth) 314 pp. $39.95

THE POLITICS OF HUMAN NATURE

Thomas Fleming

This effort to understand human nature in a political context takes up sex and gender differences, democracy and dictatorship, individual and familial patterns of association.

"Probing and thoughtful" –Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Chronicles*

"Learned, thoughtful, and superbly written"
–Robert Nisbet, *The National Review*

"Progressives and radicals could benefit from grappling with Fleming's intellectually stimulating presentation."
–*The Progressive*

"A wide-ranging and freewheeling review of sundry madnesses affecting modern political thought." –*This World*

ISBN: 0-88738-189-8 (cloth) 276 pp. $32.95

FAMILY QUESTIONS

REFLECTIONS ON THE AMERICAN SOCIAL CRISIS

Allan Carlson

What accounts for the crisis in American family life? This creative search for answers borrows from conservative, feminist, and socialist traditions, offering a number of provocative explanations.

"One of the most profoundly sensible voices on the American landscape . . . . All of his positions are carefully laid out and supported by meticulous research and precise reasoning."
–William Tucker, *The American Spectator*

"Genuinely profound" –E. Calvin Beiser, *World*

"Of interest to historians, social scientists/planners and students at the upper-division undergraduate level and above"
–D.A. Chekki, *Choice*

ISBN: 0-88738-206-1 (cloth) 335 pp. $39.95

Order from your bookstore or direct from the publisher.
Major credit cards accepted. Call (201) 932-2280

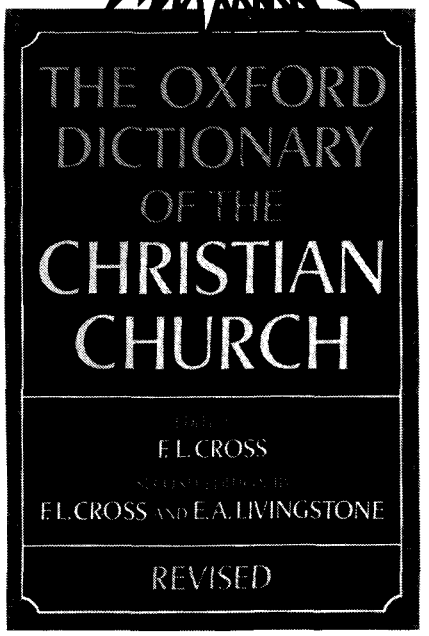
transaction publishers
Department FPO12
Rutgers–The State University
New Brunswick, N.J. 08903

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Quite simply: the finest one-volume Christian reference in the English-speaking world

"Indispensable" . . . "has no peer" . . . "the single most useful reference book for Christianity" — a few of the accolades for this magisterial work

$65 in stores — yours FREE



Nothing of Christian interest is absent from these pages. The sweep is awesome:

The history of the Church ★ doctrines ★ denominations ★ short biographies of some 4,500 eminent Christians: models of accuracy and objectivity ★ the books of the Bible and their backgrounds ★ resumes of the notable Christian writings ★ feasts ★ summaries of the teachings of theologians and philosophers: again, models of objectivity and compression ★ the works of Christian artists, sculptors and composers ★ accounts of non-Christian religions ★ descriptions of cathedrals ★ significant findings in archaeology and textual criticism ★ in fact, virtually anything or anybody with a bearing on 2,000 years of Christianity

When you seek information on matters Christian, the unabridged dictionary is skimpy or, more often, silent. Likewise the encyclopedias. The usual Christian reference works (many of them excellent) naturally focus on subjects of mostly denominational interest. Nothing approaches this volume in scope and depth.

The critics agree. Praise for the First Edition

"There is no other similar reference book so comprehensive, balanced, accurate and informative."—*Kirkus Reviews*

"A fit newcomer to the ranks of the great Oxford books. Read it through, one entry a day, and it will take eighteen years from Aaron to Zwingli, and, should you remember what you have read, which is improbable, you will know when you reach Zwingli as much as an archangel about the Church and many other matters."—Rose Macaulay, [London] *Times Literary Supplement*

"Unbiased in his treatment of Catholic subjects."—*Catholic World*

"It is certainly a book that no clergyman or library or, indeed, any reader with even a casual interest in matters historical or religious should be without."—*New York Times*

. . . and for this Second Revised Edition

"Still the single most useful reference book for Christianity in general."—*Anglican Theological Review*

"A first place to go for clear and precise information."—*Presbyterian Outlook*

"Has no peer as a one-volume encyclopedia."—*The Review & Expositor*

"This new edition is even better! I advise anyone who has an interest in the history and theology of the Christian Church to purchase it and keep it so close to his desk that he will consult it frequently."—*Currents in Theology & Mission*

- Some 6,300 entries, including cross-references
- 251 learned contributors
- Extensive bibliographies
- A giant: 1,551 pages in the generous 6½ x 9½ size

How to get this $65 reference FREE

How the Club Works

Every 4 weeks (13 times a year) you get a free copy of the Club Bulletin which offers you the Featured Selection plus a good choice of Alternates — all of interest to conservatives. ★ If you want the Featured Selection, do nothing, it will come automatically. ★ If you don't want the Featured Selection, or you do want an Alternate, indicate your wishes on the handy card enclosed with your Bulletin and return it by the deadline date. ★ The majority of Club books will be offered at 20-50% discounts, plus a charge for shipping and handling. ★ As soon as you buy and pay for 4 books at regular Club prices, your membership may be ended at any time, either by you or by the Club. ★ If you ever receive a Featured Selection without having had 10 days to decide if you want it, you may return it at Club expense for full credit. ★ Good service. No computers! ★ The Club will offer regular Superbargains, mostly at 70-90% discounts plus shipping and handling. Superbargains do NOT count toward fulfilling your Club obligation, but do enable you to buy fine books at giveaway prices. ★ Only one membership per household.

CCUL-94

CONSERVATIVE BOOK CLUB

15 OAKLAND AVENUE • HARRISON, N.Y. 10528

Please accept my membership in the Club and send FREE my copy of *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.* I agree to buy 4 additional books at regular Club prices over the next 2 years. I also agree to the Club rules spelled out in this coupon.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED